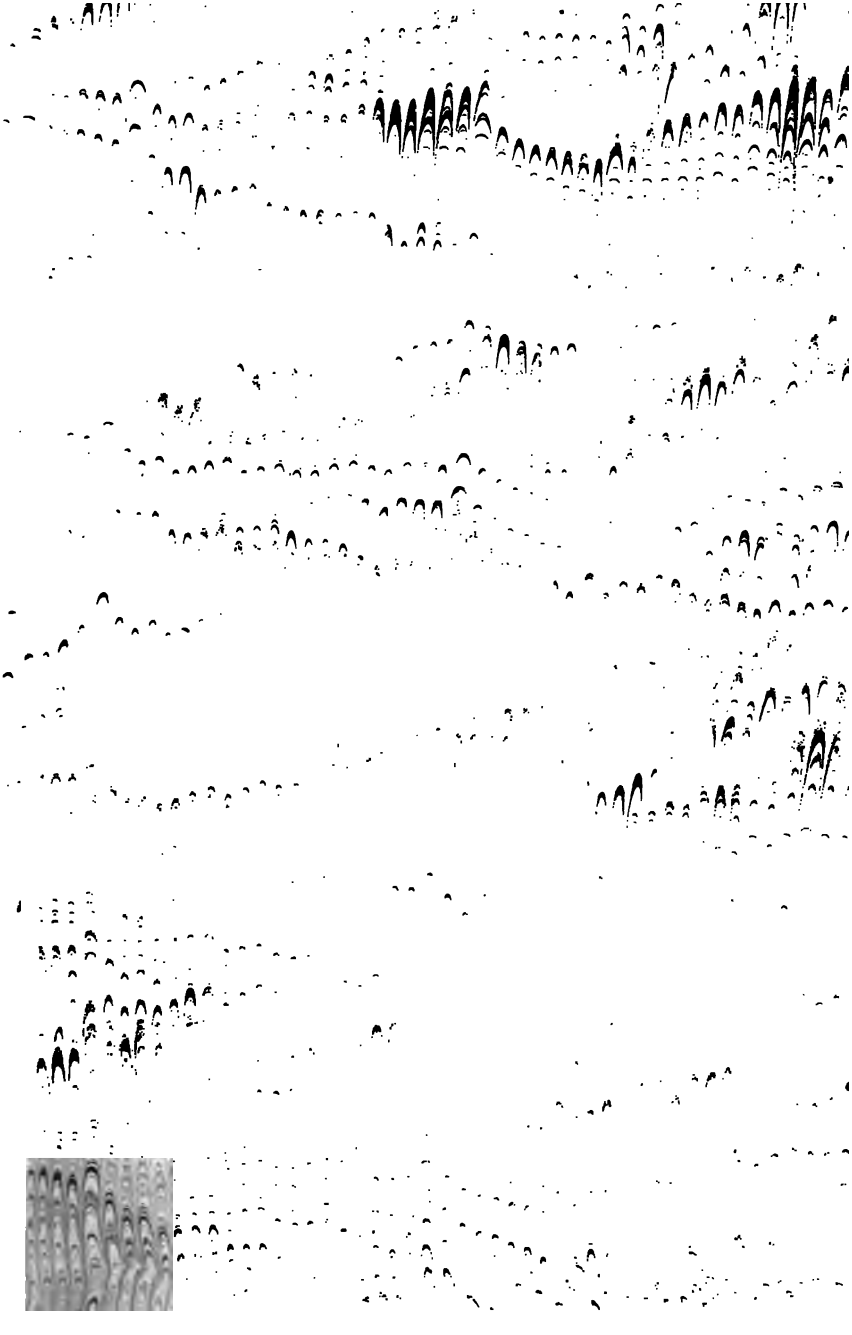

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Louis Cabot from
his Aunt Mary.

Engraved and Printed in Colours by Vizetelly Brothers and Co.

SUMMER:—SHEEP WASHING.


Costelly Brennan and Co
WASHING


SUMMER

THE BOYS SUMMER BOOK

DESCRIPTIVE OF THE

SEASON, SCENERY, RURAL LIFE,

AND

COUNTRY AMUSEMENTS.

BY THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY," "RURAL SKETCHES," ETC.

WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

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1847.

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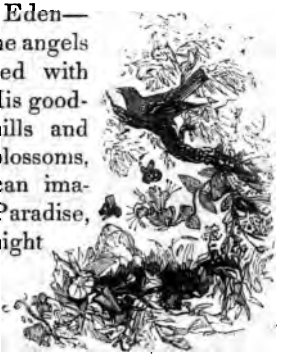
The Summer sun shines bright to-day,
The bee among the flowers doth stray,
The bird is singing on the spray,
While in the fields the new-mown hay
Throweth its fragrance every way.

SUMMER is come again, bright and beautiful as it ever cometh, for the trees and flowers never looked more lovely than they do now; and although man sinned against his Maker, and was driven from the Garden of Eden—that garden in which the angels walked, and conversed with Adam—still God, in His goodness, adorned the hills and fields with leaves and blossoms, as beautiful as we can imagine ever waved in Paradise, that their presence might gladden our hearts, and call forth our praise and gratitude, while looking upon the wonderful workmanship of his hands.



Many a time while at school have we talked about this delicious season, often wondering if we should find the young birds hopping about the neighborhood of the old nest, in the same green hawthorn hedge where they had built year after year; and often have we fancied that we could hear the sheep bleating beside the brook, where they had been driven to be washed;—we imitated the shout of the glad cuckoo, and recalled the very spot where we heard her singing in the sunshine, as she stood perched upon the topmost bough of the old ash-tree. We assembled in little groups, and planned many an excursion, in our minds, to places where hundreds of sweet wild flowers grew; to solitudes where the water-hen swam, and built, and dived, and reared her young; where the tall bulrushes waved, and the bending water-flags nodded to their shadows in the clear stream. Our memory flew back to the green straggling lanes, and fields that sloped down from the foot of many a rounded hill; to mornings when the world seemed bathed in sunshine, and the smell of the hawthorn mingled with the sweet breath of the cows, as we drove them homeward at milking-time—or mounted on the broad-backed horses, rode them to water in the clear pool beside the wood, before they dragged the heavy wagon into the hayfield. In fancy we saw the wide village-green, where the cricketers were wont to assemble, and the bank by the river side, where we spent so many happy hours in angling; for old home-scenes and healthy pastimes seemed to arise before us with a pleasanter look, as the summer holydays drew nearer, and our hearts beat lighter as we hailed the season of birds and flowers; and forests with their rich perfume, and skies hung with blue, where clouds change from silver to purple, then become golden as they gather around the setting sun—for to us summer was ever the happiest season of the year.

Up and away, then, "my merry men all," as Robin Hood

says to his foresters in the old ballad, and we will ramble together through the fields and woods, over many a high hill, and beside many a pleasant brook, and talk about the wonderful things which we are sure to meet with in our way. We will gaze upon the great oak which seems to grow up into the very sky, and examine the graceful form of the small cup-moss which is scattered around its twisted roots on the earth; look upon the huge ox that lows in the meadows, and shakes the earth with its heavy tread; and talk about the little harvest-mouse, which would not more than weigh down a farthing were it placed in the opposite scale. We will visit the spot where the fierce hawk builds its nest, and show you the home which the titmouse erects for her young ones. We will leap, and run, and shout, and sing that little woodland song of Shakspeare's, until we make the old hills echo again, as they ring back the chorus, while we merrily exclaim, from the very joyousness of our hearts,

> "Under the greenwood tree,
> Who loves to lie with me,
> And tune his merry note
> Unto the sweet bird's throat,
> Come hither—come hither."

What a "rasp, rasp," do those mowers make as they sharpen their sythes. Hark! how the sound is echoed back from yonder wood; let us pause a moment, and watch them while they mow down the bladed and tufted grass, and all the beautiful array of wild flowers. Look how firmly each man plants his foot upon the ground; what a regularity there is in the bending of their bodies, and the swinging of their arms—all moving like one man, step for step, stroke for stroke. By glancing down the field you may count the number of "swaths," which tell the width swept down by every stroke of the sythe, from where the first cut began, to where the last sweep ended; wave above wave does the grass lie in endless succession, as if the wind had blown the broad

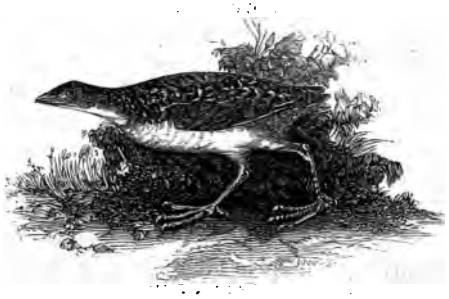
surface of a lake into ridges, and left them heaped up without motion.

The mower has no time to pause and look at the many things which would delight us; he takes no notice of the little mice which run squeaking everywhere, of the young birds whose nest he has laid bare and open to the sunshine, cutting down the feathered grass which closed all around it, and shut it up in green on every side, so that even the hovering hawk, as he balanced himself on his wings (although his eye is so sharp that he could almost see a single hair as it lay upon the ground), was never able, with his keen glance, to discover that nest, filled with the half-fledged young ones. He takes no notice of the flowers which at every sweep he prostrates to the ground—the golden buttercup, the silver daisy, the tufted clover, white and red, the purple vetch, the fragrant meadow-sweet, and the cuckoo-flower are all blended together, ridge upon ridge, soon to be piled into windrows, heaped into hay-cocks, then thrown upon the creaking wagon, and borne away, load after load, to the rickyard, and there preserved until the fields no longer furnish forth pasturage for the cattle.

Farther on, we find the haymakers busy at work, for there the grass was mown down a week ago; the farmer is in the field among his laborers, and as he is an old acquaintance of ours, we will venture in at the open gate. Take up that fork, and toss the hay about as wide and as far as you can, no matter how high you heave it, the higher the better, so that the wind may pass through and dry it thoroughly. While you are busy here, I will take up the rake and draw closer together what was spread out yesterday to dry, and soon we shall form a long bank of hay, the whole length of the field; and these in the country are called "windrows," piled high and light, that the wind may blow through, and the sun shine upon them—and a beautiful sight is a large field with fifty or a hundred of these rows, running in a white line from hedge to hedge, like

a sleeping sea, the green spaces between, the trough of the waves which seem motionless, and yet to be like it the sea must be still, which it never is. Now we will take up a fork apiece, and, commencing at the end of one of these windrows, roll it together, as we would a large snowball in winter, over and over; heavier and heavier it becomes, until it gathers into a large haycock, high as our heads: and now, after all our trouble, what say you to a somerset—head over heels, away we go, up this side and down the other; here's one of our companions already buried in the midst of it, another armful or two of hay, and not a bit of him will be seen. Warm work this, my boys; and we can scarcely proceed for laughter. Look how John shakes himself as he creeps out from the other side of the haycock, scattering the hay everywhere, like a water-spaniel that has been swimming in the river: there is no fear of our breaking any bones here, though we are all again down together. But what is this compared to loading the wagon? Just look what forkfuls the men lift up at a time—half a haycock at once—until their forms seem buried under so large a bulk. Theirs is indeed a happy life!

Hungry! ah, there is no wonder at that. Let us see what our friend the farmer has got stored up yonder at the foot of that old tree—bread and cheese and ham, and a wooden keg of excellent ale—what can we have better?—and all offered to us with a hearty welcome. But beware of the dog, for we must not proceed too near him without his master's permission; for he keeps as safe a guard over his treasures, as a sentry would over the crown jewels in the Tower of London. A word from the farmer, and the dog is friendly with us in a moment; he has done his duty, has given up his charge to his master, and he covets no more than that friendly pat of the back, which tells him, plainer than language could speak, that he has been faithful to his trust. Listen! that is the voice of the



LAND-RAIL, OR CORN CRAKE.

which I can compare to nothing else than drawing the thumb-nail sharply across the teeth of a comb, only a hundred times louder than any noise we could make on such an instrument. Country lads call it the corncrake or meadowcrake. Were we to pursue it, it would be still in a moment; and the next time we heard it, it would be far away from the spot where it is now, for it will squat amid the long grass motionless as a stone; and I remember seeing one whose head had been cut off by a mower's sythe, while it sat nestling amid the unmown grass. You rarely see it take to its wings, for it glides onward from one spot to another, without once soaring above the waving surface of the meadow. It generally builds its nest upon the ground, and lays from twelve to twenty eggs. Its back is of a beautiful brown color, barred with black; while the under parts are of a pale yellowish brown, almost softened into white beneath the belly, with about as much tail as some of the charity school-boys in London have to their coats, that is, just enough projecting to take away the name of jacket. We have heard a score of them at a time creeking together in the rich meadow-lands which stretch beside the Trent in Lincolnshire. It is a most difficult bird to capture, and we never remember having seen one that was tame. Some say they are much

finer eating than a partridge, but for our part we would much rather hear their "creek, creek," as we do now, than sit down and make our dinner off them.

It would form a pretty picture were we to stay here until nearly sunset, and watch the

HAYMAKERS RETURNING HOME

in the evening; to see them in their rustic custumes threading their way along yonder winding road. One carrying a rake, another a hayfork, a third with the bottle and basket swinging over his shoulder—their faces browned with the hues of health and labor; to see them drop off, one by one, just where a

thatched cottage appears here and there in the landscape, half-hidden amid the surrounding trees. They will need no opiate to send them to rest; the blackbird and the throstle will sing their evening hymn, and as the twilight shadows settle down into a deeper blue, the voice of the nightingale will perchance be heard chanting her "tirra-lirra" around their homesteads. In the morning, while the dew is yet hanging upon the rose, the speckled lark, starting from its slumber beside the daisy, will hymn its early matin high in the air, and pour forth a flood of song, which shall cause the awakened laborer to peep out from his lattice, half-buried in woodbine, and thank God for the coming of another day which seemeth so favorable to the gathering in of the hay-harvest: for beautiful is the opening of morning, when the tall tree-tops are first gilded with the slanting sunbeams, which seem to quiver as they shine. Oh! what a noise do the birds then make in the woods! what a humming of insects there is in the air, and a sweet singing sound among the waters! you hear the bird-boy's whistle, and the milkmaid's song, and catch the murmuring the bees make among the flowers, as they come out light and return home laden with honey to their hives! And many celebrated men, I can tell you, have not thought their time ill spent in watching the habits of these curious insects; they select a season for swarming, waiting even for days, when the weather is unfavorable; and it is believed by many that they first send out scouts to select a spot suitable for the swarm to alight upon. No sovereign rides forth with a greater train of attendants than a queen-bee; for she has her outriders, her spies, and generals, her armed troops who hem her in every way, guarding her with watchful and jealous eyes; and where she once alights, there the whole army settle down, until it is almost a marvel that they do not kill her with the very weight of their kindness. If not recaptured and again placed in their hives, they will often commence forming their

honey-comb in the hollow bole of a tree; and there are instances on record in which they have begun to build their cells on an open and unsheltered bough.

What a pleasant walk have we here along the banks of this cool river! and at this secluded corner, behold there are a number of

BOYS BATHING.

Unless you can swim well, never venture into deep water. I well remember, when a boy, being present when one of our companions was drowned. He ventured out too far, and the current of the river carried him off his feet. Although there was no hole nor dangerous spot where we were bathing—for a man seven feet high might have walked out foot by foot, and not lost more than two or three inches of his height in the water at a stride, so gradual and sure was the slope of the gravel-bed—yet the torrent swept this poor boy off his feet, and he was drowned!

The scene rises as vividly before me as if it had but happened yesterday. I remember well it was his birthday; in

honor of which his fond mother had allowed him to put on his Sunday clothes. It was after dinner when we went out for a walk. His mother bade us not stay very late, and invited two or three of us (his chosen playmates) to come home with him to tea. She had made a large plum-cake to celebrate his birthday, for he was their only child. I forget now who it was that first proposed we should go and bathe. It was in June; a beautiful hot sunshiny day; so, instead of going to the Long Plantation a bird-nesting, as we at first intended to do, we turned off at Ashcroft Dike, passed the old oil-mill, and wandered on the banks of the river, over a field or two, until we arrived at the Gravel-Bed, our favorite bathing-place. We placed our clothes, as usual, carefully under the willows on the bank, one or two kindly throwing down their everyday garments, that our companion might put his Sunday clothes upon them, and so preserve them from being soiled. I was reckoned a good swimmer, and, if I remember rightly, made my way at once across the deep river. Greatly have I regretted this since, for, saving myself, there was but another among us who could swim, and he was close upon my heels when the alarm was given that our comrade was drowning. The river Trent, in which we were bathing, is rather wide; and as I was resting myself on the opposite bank, I did not at first clearly comprehend what had happened; for no young savages ever yelled or shouted louder at the sight of a white man than we were wont to do while bathing. It was the silence which followed that alarmed me most, and I swam back again with a heavy heart; for, without being told, I knew that something had happened. On the bank the group of boys was huddled together, some crying, others silent—all sorrowful. My companion who could swim assisted me, and we dived for him in turns, until we were compelled to lie down on the shore, breathless and exhausted, and almost black in the face through our exertions. I shall carry the scar to my grave which marks the

wound I then received, through the cap of my knee striking against a stone while searching for him at the bottom of the river. It was a melancholy picture was that scene on the banks of the Trent; and such a one I hope it will never be my lot to witness again! We looked over the water, on which the sunshine streamed, trying to fix upon the very spot where he had sunk, as if we expected to see him appear once more; but the river rolled on as smoothly as if it had never closed over a human being. After waiting long, we dressed ourselves in silence, each eying the clothes which our companion would never wear again. Then we began to ask one another who would undertake the painful task of carrying home the clothes of the drowned boy.

At length we divided his garments among us: his little waistcoat was borne by one, his jacket by another; each carried something, from his neckerchief to a single boot. We entered the town by the backway, as being less frequented; we passed the school, where he had that very morning received a reward of merit. One of us went and informed the schoolmaster of his death. We left his clothes in the schoolroom, and good Parson Preedom was sent for; and he carried the sorrowful tidings to the poor drowned boy's mother. I have heard the neighbors say it was a heart-breaking scene; that she had been to the door many times to look for us; had cut up the plum-cake, and prepared the tea;—but that day none of us dared to venture near her. It was several days before the dead body of our companion was discovered, when most of his school-fellows attended the funeral. It was the first heavy sorrow that many of us had ever felt, for he was a great favorite with us all.

Mark where that boat comes slowly along, drawn by the horse which traverses the hauling-path. There is a look of mischief about the man who drives the horse. See, he has checked its speed; the hauling-line is slack, and sweeps up

the boys' clothes, who are too happy in the water to pay any attention to what is passing on the land. A smart stroke of the whip, and the rope is again on the full stretch, a perfect clothes-line—jackets, trowsers, and shirts, there they dangle! the man laughing heartily, and seeming to take no notice of the

BOYS IN PURSUIT OF THEIR CLOTHES.

as they hurry out of the river, and endeavor to regain their garments. Now a jacket is shaken off, and picked up; and after having led them a chase the whole length of a field, the driver (who pretends he is not aware of what has occurred) at last stops his horse, and restores to them the remainder of their clothes. Then commences a hunt for a lost knife, a pencil-case, or something or another, which has fallen out of their pockets while the hauling-line had possession of their garments; and those who have lost nothing are laughing at the fun, though they are good-natured enough to assist their companions in the search.

Again, I would warn you never to venture into deep water unless you can swim, or have some one with you that can, and who is ready to keep a close watch in case of an accident. Not that swimming is at all difficult to learn, if a boy has courage enough not to mind being soused head over ears a few times in safe and shallow water; but he may try to swim just as well where it is only a yard deep, as if he ventured up to the neck. Never, while learning to swim, venture into a strong current, for fear of being swept off your feet. Wade as far in at first as you can with safety, then turn, with your face toward the shore, and try to make a stroke. Any boy who can swim will be proud to show you how to strike out with the hands and feet, at the same moment of time. Once learn to draw up the knees, and throw back the legs when you lanch out the arms, and open the hands to strike, and you will soon be able to swim. Corks, planks, bladders, and such like things, are very well for the timid; but a courageous boy will sooner learn without such assistance, and will swim all the better afterward through never having used them. Above all, remember that every boy may soon swim, if he will but try.

We have said nothing about bathing as conducive to good health, beside being of itself a noble exercise. If you can swim, what a triumph it is to know that you can cross a deep river without the aid of a boat! But, oh! the proud feeling, to be conscious that you are almost as safe in the water as on land; to look at a river, and be able to say, "I neither care for your being deep nor strong; I can toss your waters aside by the strength of my arm, and, in spite of your roaring and rolling, master you. You may carry me a few yards lower down by your power, but I can get across for all that, by swimming, like a fish, with my face against the stream! Here goes for the tree opposite—hey! and back again, old river (by God's permission), in spite of your strength!"

Oh! how cool, and healthy, and lively one feels after a good swim, especially if we do not stay in the water too long! Byron was almost as proud of having swum across the Hellespont, like Leander of old, as he was of having written "Childe Harold;" nay, he boasted more of having accomplished the former feat than he was ever known to do about the best poem he ever wrote, for it was a deed which no coward dare have ventured upon: and courage is a grand thing for either man or boy to possess, so long as they never make a foolish use of it. If Nelson never knew what fear was in his boyish days, depend upon it he was not so well acquainted with danger as he was in his after-life.

But I have not yet told you of our

BOATING EXPLOITS.

and the dangers we often encountered when we went out to meet the tide. There are not many rivers up which the tide —or Heygre, as it is called in the country—comes; and those who never before beheld such a sight, would be struck with

fear and astonishment. Fancy yourself in a boat on a broad, calm river, in a still summer's evening, borne gently along by the current, and scarcely a ripple on the smooth surface of the water, saving what is made by the swallow as it every now and then dips down. Away you go, laughing and chatting, and leaving the boat to its own lazy motion, just gliding along as it likes past the old town, beyond the last wharf, below the white mill; away and away, between winding banks, where willows are ever waving; between sweet meadows, where flocks bleat, and herds low; leaving one village on the right hand, and another on the left, and still moving along with a kind of dreamy, idle motion, just as the water wills it, just as the boat chooses to drop down—when, hark! hush! what sound is that, which comes like the first roaring of a storm through the forest? Although it is yet above a mile off, you hear that low, sullen roar, deepening every moment as it draws closer. Louder, and louder—nearer and nearer it approaches. Then you hear a distant shout of human voices; sailor calling to sailor, ship answering to ship; onward and onward the alarm is sounded, repeated by the boat above you, as you send downward the cry of "Ware Heygre!"—which is taken up and echoed by every boat upon the river for miles away. Steady, boys! "swape" her head half-round, so that her nose shall just plough the high hill of water which is coming down thundering upon us. How awful it looks!—a huge wall of water swelling within twenty feet of us, as if some huge monster, large as the hills, had suddenly risen from the deep river-bed, and that was the swell he made before heaving his gigantic and hideous head above the surface of the river! Fear not, my boys; we pardon your looking a little pale, as this is the first time you have been out on such an adventure. Steady, steady! we shall be upset if you all rush to the opposite side of the boat, aud she will be turned bottom upward in a moment. Be firm! fear not, move not!

Hold on by the "thofts" and sides as firmly as you like; but, at the peril of your lives, move not! It comes! Bang! dash!—up in the air, and down with a plunge that almost makes us dizzy. Steady, round with her head—and we are off like an arrow from a bow, half-filled with water, it is true, and drenched to the very skin; but ours is a good, strong, deep boat, made for the stormy sea-service; and we have an old rusty saucepan at the bottom, ready to bale her out with. So, hurrah, my boys! for now we have nothing to fear. What a pace we go! By Jove, it is like dashing down the falls of the Niagara! There never was a vessel in the world went quicker through half-a-mile of water than we have done. What a grand sight! was it not? The very trees on the bank seemed to be flying in the air, so rapidly did we dart past them; and as for the houses, every window seemed to dance by in long lines of light! Oh! a pleasant place to live beside, is a noble river like the Trent, where the great black porpoises come up out of the sea to look at you, and the immense sturgeons every now and then make such a swell in the water beside your boat, that you would hardly be astonished if a whale came next, whipped out his tail, and gave you a whack with it. "And dare you," asks some young reader, "swim and bathe in such a river?" "Dare we? Ah!" we answer, "that we dare!"—and have seen little urchins in the water, seven or eight years old, "naked and undismayed," pelting a porpoise almost as big as an elephant, and regretting they could not get near enough to drop a little salt on its tail. Caught? Ay! that they are, very often—dragged to shore, carried off in a wagon, shoved in the stable of some village inn, which lies far away from the river, and shown at a penny a-head to the wondering rustics!

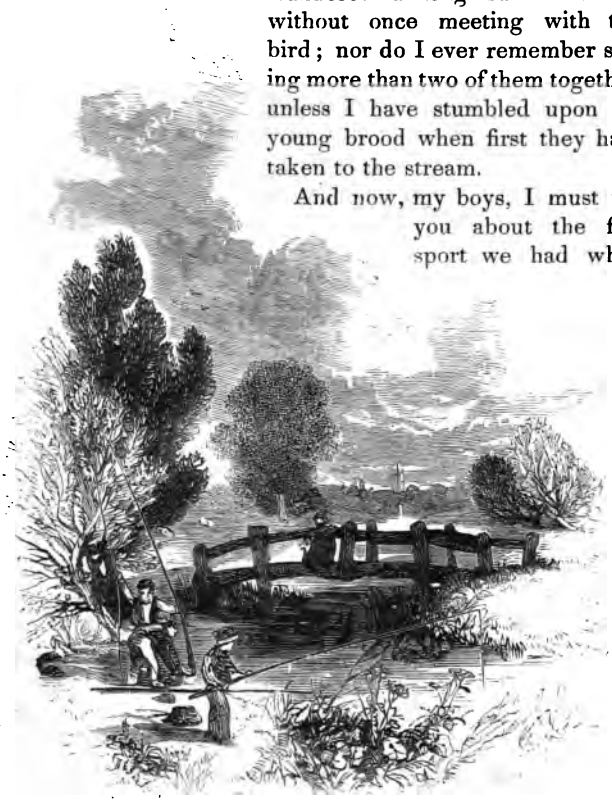
Observe that dark-looking bird, swimming about beneath the shadow of the sedge; it is the

WATER-HEN.

which sometimes builds its nest so near the edge of the water, that after heavy rains it is often carried away, or buried beneath the stream. It is a wild, solitary bird, selecting the most dark and gloomy spots to build in; and its nest is often occupied by the water-rat. Were a large pike to make its appearance, the water-hen would quickly hurry to her nest for shelter, for fear the pike should snap her up at a mouthful; her young ones are frequently devoured by fish, for they take to the water soon after they are hatched; and, no doubt, through their being exposed to so many dangers while young, is the cause why the species are so scarce, and so seldom seen. Observe what a rich red there is about the base of the bill, and what a clear white it shows underneath the tail, as it dives, or turns to and fro in the shadow of the overhanging willow. Its nest has a very rugged appearance, and is composed of flags or rushes, and such aquatic weeds as grow beside the pool: the eggs, which vary from five to seven or nine in number, are of a dirty yellow color, and look as if they were spotted with rust. I wish I could show you her young, but it is too late, unless she has built a second time—

such little black downy things you never saw; they look like so many rats sailing about in the water. We might have wandered a long summer's day without once meeting with this bird; nor do I ever remember seeing more than two of them together, unless I have stumbled upon the young brood when first they have taken to the stream.

And now, my boys, I must tell you about the fine sport we had while



ANGLING

in the streams and sluices which fall into this beautiful river Trent. Every mile or so, as you walk on its banks, you meet

with great floodgates, which can be opened or shut to keep the water and fish in, or to let them out at pleasure. And, as we have before said, these great water-courses, called sluices, dikes, or delfs—which latter is an old Saxon name for a place that has been dug out—go for miles through the wide marshes and rich pastures, and are filled with almost all kinds of fresh-water fish: bearded barbel; red-finned roach; prickly perch; pike, with enormous jaws, and heads like crocodiles; and spotted tench, grayling, and gudgeon; eels that were wont to hide under stones, break our lines, swallow our hooks, and then escape; bleak, which we caught to bait our bottom lines with; and I can not tell how many other kinds of fish, which were found in abundance in these pleasant inland streams. And I can tell you, we were never fast for a fishing-rod where so many beautiful willow-trees grew; but up we clomb, and cut down one which was small, and straight, and tapering; a pennyworth of strong twine from the grocer's formed our fishing-line; we made an excellent float out of an old pen and a cork; fastened our hooks, of all sizes, to the long horsehairs which we twisted with our own hands; and as for baits, we had only to go to the fellmongers for gentles, or dig in the surrounding banks for worms. We were well acquainted with the deeps and shallows; knew, to an inch, how to adjust the float, so that we might either angle for top or bottom fish: and we have carried home many a good fry in our day. Oh! it was a pleasant life was this angling, on that beautiful river, or amid these sequestered streams; so exciting if you chanced to have a bite from a big barbel—and I will tell you now, how a big fish once served me.

I had placed my rod upon the bank for a moment, to pick up a fish I had caught, which was dancing and jumping, and leaping, and at every spring getting nearer and nearer to the river, and would, at another bound or two, no doubt, had I not quickly have removed him, regained his native element.

Well, do you know, just as I had succeeded in throwing him a good way out among the grass again, with the other fish I had caught, which lay scattered here and there and everywhere, another boy who was angling at a little distance, but had his eye on my float at the same time, exclaimed, "Oh, there's such a bite at your line!" I turned round in time enough to see my rod swimming out in the river, for the fish was so strong that it had actually pulled the rod from off the bank. Away went the fish, with the hook in its jaws, farther and farther out into the river, occasionally pulling, for a moment or two, a portion of the rod under water. Along the bank we ran, watching the progress of the rod as it went floating down the current, now dragged a little on this side, then again on that, just as the fish swam and struggled with the strong hook imbedded in its jaws. There was an old-fashioned ferry-house two or three fields off, beside the river; and thitherward we hastened with all the speed we could, to get out the ferryboat, and regain again, if possible, my fishing-rod. The honest ferryman was as worthy and good-hearted an old soul as ever broke bread, and was as much delighted with the adventure as we ourselves were; and when he saw the rod come sailing down in the sunshine, with the top bobbing at intervals under the water, he exclaimed, "By gum, that's a whacker, I'll be bound! A ten or a twelve pounder, I'll take my appydavy on it!"—meaning, no doubt, affidavit. Ah! you should have seen us push out with the boat! How anxiously we watched for the rod, as it floated nearer! How the boat kept dropping down the stream! How the rod crossed first on one side, then on the other! How we stretched over the boat's side! How the old ferryman stood with the boat-hook in his hand, ready to get hold of the fishing-rod as soon as he could; and how, at last, he did get hold of the rod, and said, "By gum, it is a whacker!"—and how, after a long time, and a deal of

patience, we saw the great barbel sprawling at the bottom of the ferryboat, and banging about as if it would have driven a hole through the bottom if it could. That was the largest barbel I ever saw caught, and was more than the old ferryman and his family could eat at a meal.

Then you should have seen us after a day's angling, when, getting a small willow-twig, we twisted it, and tying a kind of knot or loop at the thick end, to prevent the fish from falling off, we thrust the smaller part through the gills, for they had all been dead a long time then, and commenced stringing them—beginning with the larger fish first, and diminishing their size as the string became shorter, from the huge barbel at the bottom to the little bleaks at the top, "small by degrees and beautifully less." Weren't we proud when we walked into the town or village, with such a row of fish thrown over our shoulder—twenty or thirty!—ay, even sometimes more on the same string? Then old Uncle John used to joke us so, and anger us, and say that we had been fishing with the silver hook, which means buying the fish from other boys who had caught them. Now, you know, this was too bad when we had caught all the fish ourselves. Not but that there are plenty of boys who, through either being indifferent anglers, or having had what they call bad luck, would not hesitate, if they had the money, to buy up the fish which their poorer companions had caught, and taking them home, perhaps without exactly telling a story, would say, "See! what luck we have had to-day!" This, as we have before said, is what Uncle John called "fishing with the silver hook!"

Yet it wasn't the fish alone that we cared so much about, after all; but the pleasure we enjoyed, the fresh air, the sweet sunshine, the green trees that quivered and twinkled as they overhung the water, the willows that waved, and the bulrushes and water-flags that bowed, and nodded, and swayed to and fro lower down beside the water's edge, and the little

birds that all day long kept flying in and out of these shady and sedgy recesses—to watch the weeds waving, and the birds, afforded us quite as much pleasure as angling. Then it was so delightful to wander home in the tranquil summer evenings, passing the haymakers and the groups of country people who had been out all day working in the fields, and sometimes to see such pretty road-side pictures—a young girl, perchance, milking, by the side of some green hawthorn hedge, or under the shadow of an old majestic tree, singing to herself like a bird, and making us think that there is no happier state of existence than a country life. Then a consultation was held among us, and all the bread we could muster was turned out, pieces that had been in our hats or pockets all day, or had lain in our handkerchiefs on the bank, and got dried in the sunshine, which we had handled with our fishy fingers, not altogether free from dirt—all these were turned out, for every mouthful was precious now, and we bargained with the pretty milkmaid for many a dishful of her white, foamy, warm new milk, which we drank from such a clean wooden dish, white and thin, and shaped like an immense saucer. Oh! what a delicious meal that was! How sweetly did the dirty and fishy bread go down! All the dainties we ever tasted in after-days can never be named beside those dirty and delicious morsels; and when we had no money, we gave her one of our largest fish—just as Izaak Walton did in his day, above two hundred years ago, when he drank a draught of red cow's milk, and chatted with pretty Maudlin and her honest mother, as he himself tells us in his delightful book on angling.

But I must now tell you a good story about Ducky Dent, who wasn't altogether so sharp as he might have been. We used to say he was born about five-and-twenty minutes too late. His fond old mother never called him any thing but Ducky. Now, her Ducky, at the time we are about to bring

him before our readers, could not be a day less than forty years old; and we used to call him a tough Ducky! He shaved once a-week, and on a Saturday had a beard like a Billy-goat; a little snub nose, that cocked up like a button-topped mushroom; a good-natured squint in both eyes, quite able, as the saying is, to look round a corner. He was also knock-kneed, and stuttered dreadfully. Had you met him in the street for the first time, you would have stopped and laughed at him with all your might; for boys can not help laughing sometimes, when they see such an odd countenance. He was the very image of some funny little old man, such as you see occasionally upon a jug, or stuck upon a mantle-piece; but, as his dear old mother said, "a better hearted cretur was never King of England;" and she was right. She rushed one day into Nanny Harrison's, her next door neighbor, in such a pleasing pucker, that, as Nanny said, it quite did your heart good to see her, and exclaimed, "Hey, Nanny, lass! they say my Ducky's soft; but he isn't. I'd proof o' that to-day, when I was ironing; for he came, and took up one o' my hot irons, and laid it down again in a moment, without my telling him! Now, you see, Nanny, if my Ducky had been soft, he would have kept it in his hand until it had burned him, and not laid it down, like a sensible lad as he is. If any body ever says he's soft, Nanny, tell 'em that; then see whether they won't say he's sharp enough, or not!"

Ducky Dent was, however, a famous fisherman, and the best setter of bottom lines along the river. You know what a bottom line is—a great long, strong string, with hooks fastened to it, about three or four feet apart from each other; one end of this you fasten down with a stout peg, at about low-water mark, by the river side; then making a stone fast to the other end, you throw the stone as far out as you can into the river—line, hooks, and all, following as a matter of course, and there you leave it all night, when the tide sets in, and makes deep

water for yards above it. Next morning you go again at low water to see what there is on the hooks, for remember that it has been fishing by itself all night long. Well, you know, one night Ducky Dent having set his bottom line, and we having watched until he went away, took up the line, fastened a large red herring to one of the hooks, and threw it in again, just as he himself had before done. Fancy his astonishment next morning, when he came to take up the bottom line, and found on it a pike, an eel, and a red herring—the first red herring, as he said, he had ever caught before in his life; and it had such a funny mouth, too, and smelled just like those you bought in the shops. He showed it to every body he knew, and every body, of course, laughed heartily: some advising him in future to bait with boiled potatoes; at all events, it satisfied Ducky Dent that a salt, dried, red herring was a fresh-water fish; for, as his mother said, "he had caught it himself, and nobody could deny that!"

THE WATER-RAT

is a beautiful animal, which we often saw when angling, and

which frequents our brooks and river sides. It is an expert swimmer and diver, and you would be delighted to see it paddling about in the water; raising its short, thick head, and peering up with its small, dark eyes, then nibbling off a leaf here and there, and plunging to the bottom the moment it is alarmed; for a water-rat lives entirely upon vegetables and roots, and such water-plants as grow about its haunts; and all that is said about its eating fish and destroying young ducks is untrue: a more harmless and inoffensive animal can not be found on the banks of our rivers. Were we to examine this bank narrowly, we should no doubt discover the hole somewhere about, which leads to its nest. And you'd be astonished were you to take a long, thin willow, which would bend every way, to find the immense depth to which those holes extend; but what is the most curious of all, the hole which leads to its nest is sometimes beneath the water; so that the rat has but to dive down and enter it, and, as the hole is made to ascend above the water into the bank, after having dragged his furry coat through a foot or two of water at the bottom of his hole, he soon finds himself safe enough in his nest on dry land. I remember, when we were boys, being very much puzzled about this, for we had often watched two water-rats swimming about at the foot of a bank, which was free from sedge and willows, for a considerable distance, yet, when they dived, and we had lost sight of them, they did not appear again sometimes for an hour or more; and this, I can assure you, puzzled us very much, for we knew it could not remain under water above a minute or so without coming up to breathe. As it was a dry summer, the water in the brook of course got lower every day; and when it sunk about a foot within its bed, it left bare and dry the hole which led to the nest of the water-rat, and into which we afterward saw them enter many a time. It is very cruel to hunt and kill these beautiful and harmless little animals with dogs. I am sure a

kind-hearted boy would find much greater pleasure in watching their playful habits, as they swim about in the water, than in destroying them. Observant boys might add a great deal to our knowledge of natural history, if in their rambles they would watch more narrowly the habits of animals instead of delighting so much in killing them; for they are no doubt as happy in their way as we are in our own, and find as much pleasure in their play and recreation as the happiest group of boys who ever sallied forth to enjoy themselves in the wide range of the green fields. I should love that boy much better who would turn aside rather than tread upon a worm than he who willfully placed his foot upon it; for remember the great Shakspeare has told us, that the "beetle we tread upon feels as great a pang as when a giant dies." And yet, after all this sermonizing, I am afraid that I was not a bit better than other boys. I will tell you why.

You see that hole in the bank? Years ago I remember the encounter we had there while storming a wasp's nest; it was on a Wednesday morning, before school-time, and we wanted the grubs to fish with in the afternoon, which was our half-holyday: so here we came, in the broad sunshine, while the whole of the armed host were flying in and out of the hole in the bank, beating around our heads, and threatening what they would do unless we decamped. Several of us were armed with green branches, with which we beat off the dreaded scouts, who began to murmur louder and louder every moment. We had made a long tube of smoldering paper, which was filled with powdered brimstone, and all that was necessary to be done was to thrust the tube into the mouth of the nest, set fire to it, and then close up the aperture. But who dare storm such a citadel, or head such a forlorn hope, when every moment scores of wasps were issuing out ready to do battle? We had heard that wasps could not sting through a silk handkerchief, so a boy was at last found who had cour-

age enough to cover his head with one, and, drawing on a pair of old gloves, he went boldly forward and thrust the sulphureous tube, which was lighted and handed to him, into the hole; and scarcely had the smoke begun to rise before he came jumping off, and shrieking as if he himself was on fire. The wasps had stung through the silk, had got into his waistcoat, had surrounded us every way; not a spot was clear saving where the burning tube threw out its deathly smoke on the bank; and another lad was found bold enough, in the midst of the fight, to rush forward and thrust a large handful of wet clay on the mouth of the nest; when lo! they had another outlet, and out came the enraged host uninjured. What a battle had we then to fight! not one among us but was wounded: we slew scores, but still the ranks were filled up, for it was the "strongest" wasp's nest we had ever stormed. Some shrieked, some howled, others ran away, pursued by the winged enemy; some carried off the foe concealed in their dresses; eyes were soon to be closed up; lips swollen; necks and bosoms stung; hands rendered unbearable, for not one among our number escaped; and when we presented ourselves at the school-door, we were all ordered home like so many soldiers who are sent, after a battle, to the nearest hospital. Some of us were put to bed, and the swollen places rubbed with honey; and more than one boy had his eyes sealed up, and was unable to see for a day or two; the pain we endured for a time was dreadful; nor did we, after all, succeed in carrying off the nest. Were we not rightly served? What right had we to attempt to burn and stifle the wasps in their nest? True, they are dangerous insects; yet they seldom sting any one unless they are first attacked, and then they can defend themselves to some purpose. Any boy who has burned himself severely may form a correct notion of the pain inflicted by the sting of a wasp: for although the latter is less dangerous in the end, yet it is equally painful while it

lasts. Their nests are very curious, and in form resemble the honey-comb, being full of cells, in which the white grubs are deposited; and you will be surprised when I tell you that they are the oldest paper-makers on record.

Reaumur states, that for twenty years he endeavored, without success, to discover the materials employed by wasps in forming the blue, gray, papery substance, so much used in the structure of their nests. One day, however, he saw a female wasp alight on the sash of the window; and it struck him, while watching her gnawing away the wood with her mandibles, that it was from such materials as these she formed the substance which had so long puzzled him. He saw her detach from the wood a bundle of fibers, about the tenth of an inch in length, and finer than a hair; and as she did not swallow them, but gathered them into a mass with her feet, he had no doubt but that his opinion was correct. In a short time he saw her shift to another part of the window, and carry with her the fibers which she had collected, and to which she continued to add. He then caught her, and began to examine her bundle, and found that it was neither yet moistened nor rolled into a ball, as it is always done before used by the wasp in her building. He also noticed that, before detaching the fibers, she bruised them into a kind of lint with her mandibles. All this he imitated with his penknife, bruising and paring the same wood till it resembled the fibers collected by the wasp: and so he discovered how wasps manufactured their paper; for these fibers are kneaded together into a kind of paste, and when she has formed a round ball of them, she spreads it out into a leaf, nearly as thin as tissue paper; and this she accomplishes by moving backward, and leveling it with her mandibles, her tongue, and her teeth. And so the wasp forms paper, placing layer upon layer, fifteen or sixteen sheets deep, and thus preventing the earth from falling down into her nest.

There is nothing in Nature but what is worthy of observation: even a summer shower, if watched with an attentive eye, is highly interesting. It comes down all at once in large downright drops; you may count every one within the space of a yard upon the spotted and dusty high-road; in a pond it is truly beautiful, making such a variety of circles, as if only to break them again in an instant; then it keeps up such a "pat, patting," among the leaves—you stand under a thick leafy tree, and can hear the pleasant rattling above your head, until drop after drop comes through and begins to fall upon the ground where you shelter, and which, when all around beside seemed soaked with wet, had hitherto remained dry. And that shower had, perhaps, been drawn up by a water-spout out of some large lake, or pond: and we have before now felt a frog come thump upon our hat in a summer shower. What! you exclaim, does it ever rain frogs? Ay, that it does; for as in the old game of "Take care of your heads!" "What goes up must come down." Why, you see, it stands to sense that if the water-spout has sucked up a few hundreds of frogs from some marshy lake, they are sure to come down again with a "rattle at their heels," as the old women say when they threaten to fetch home some truant. And oh! what a delicious odor hangs about the air after a refreshing shower; it seems as if the rain had called out a thousand fragrances, which had slept motionless among the leaves and flowers.

> "Sunshine shower,
> Rain for half-an-hour"

used to be our song when we were boys, and wanted to get out to play; and then, if the sun did chance to break out again, and the sky to clear up, that was the time for a walk, no matter what hour of the day it might have been.

But really there are so many curious things to be seen during a ramble in summer, that I am afraid I shall never be able to make you acquainted with a twentieth part of them;

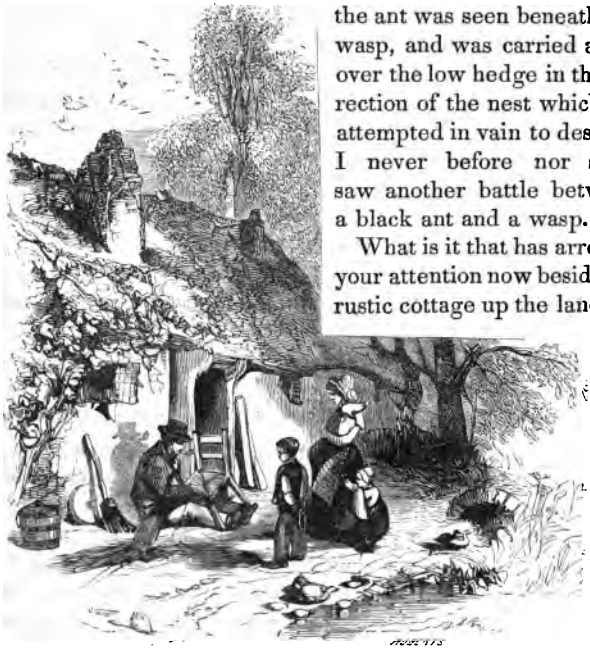
there is not a flower blows, however common it may appear to the eye, but what, when examined, shows such harmony and beauty in its construction, that you may, by a little study, identify it with an extensive class, all bearing a close resemblance to each other. You look over this unmown field, and nothing strikes your attention but the difference of color among the wild flowers. You little dream of the beauty and variety there is among the grasses above, and that many of them are more exquisite in form and structure than the proudest flower that ever bloomed. Wheat is the monarch of grass, the king of all green and bladed things; and you will find his resemblance among a score of other grasses, the oat-grass, and the rye-grass, and many an eary-head that furnishes the birds with food. You never can mistake the species after having once noticed the straight, unbranched stalk, with the narrow flag-like leaf, which starts from every knob or joint of the "straw," as if it was a portion of the stem, and which, upon examination, you will find it is, and that "peeling straws" is no impossibility: that, in the common grasses, which cattle browse upon, the more they eat the stronger the root becomes; and that in many kinds cattle leave untouched the straws that bear the seed and flower, which, when ripened, are blown out of the husks, and so left to sow themselves. But what is still more singular, those grasses which grow on the tops of cold mountains, where it is too bleak for the sun to perfect the flower, there the seed shoots up afresh from the old root, and the buds, which are formed during the winter, thus grow on independent of the new seed. We have not time now; but when we have, we will gather a handful of grass from some field, then sit down and count the different varieties which each has culled, and you will be delighted with the beautiful and silky flowers which many of them bear; nor will you ever after walk through a field without admiring the flowers of the grass.

Did you ever before see the nest of the large black ant? Here's a pile, looking as if the earth all about had been rolled into little round balls. Just thrust in the end of your stick, and hundreds will rush out in a moment. Beware of their bite: it is awful! I once threw a dead mole on this very nest, and the next day it was picked so clean that you might have fancied the bones had been polished with some instrument. I know of no method by which you could obtain such clean and perfect skeletons of birds or small animals, as leaving them for a day or so on the nest of the black ant. Look at the one here, which I have touched; how he spars at me with his legs, seeming to sit down to it. I would not place my hand for a minute on that nest for a trifle.

I was once walking by here when something came with a loud bang against my hat. I uncovered my head to see what it was, and beheld a large wasp carrying off a black ant. I shook them off into the middle of the road. Oh, what a struggle there was between them! The ant had got hold of one of the wasp's wings, and he could not rise. You should have seen what a fast hold he kept: it was like two boys pulling at a rope, as in the game of French and English; the wasp struggled to get his wing free; then the ant pulled as if he would have dragged the wing off; and so they kept at it for several seconds, till at length the wasp began to try other means to conquer his rebellious captive. For a dozen times did he then endeavor to get the ant under him, but in vain; the ant pulled with all his strength at the end of the wing he had seized upon, and so prevented the wasp from rising. If the latter, by the aid of the one wing which was free, managed to rise a few inches, he was quickly brought down to the ground again, by the strength and weight of the ant. The struggle lasted for several minutes, and neither seemed to obtain any advantage. You would have been astonished had you but seen into what attitudes the wasp wriggled its elastic body;

still the ant kept a firm hold on the right wing, and escape seemed impossible. At last, the wasp made a desperate effort, and, expanding its one wing, rose from the ground several times in rapid succession, each time bending its body into an arch, and endeavoring to get the ant undermost. The last fall seemed to have stunned its opponent. It was scarcely the work of a moment; and the ant was seen beneath the wasp, and was carried away over the low hedge in the direction of the nest which we attempted in vain to destroy. I never before nor since saw another battle between a black ant and a wasp.

What is it that has arrested your attention now beside the rustic cottage up the lane?—



THE OLD CHAIR BOTTOMER.

He leads a happy life enough, no doubt. You see the small rushes which he every now and then mixes with the larger ones? Those are of English growth; such we saw beside

the river, and waving above the bank where we beheld the water-hen. He can always have plenty of those for the trouble of cutting them; the larger ones come from Holland. His is not so good a trade as it once was, for there are not so many chairs bottomed with rushes since cane seats came into fashion. Watch how nimbly and strongly he twists the rushes with his fingers; now in this corner, then in that, plat after plat is laid down; and every time he goes round the corner of the chair, the hole in the middle grows less. How merrily the ragged fellow whistles! What cares he? He carries his shop upon his back, and finds employment in every village he comes to. If he does his work well, he is sure of a glass of beer and a crust of bread and cheese. That woman keeps the village alehouse, and she has come to talk with him about mending and bottoming her chairs before the club-feast is held at her house. Rare quarters will he have there; and you will hear him singing in the kitchen, on an evening after he has done his work, like a linnet; and perhaps his old crony, the tinker, is at work somewhere in the neighborhood, and will join him at night, when they will talk over the pleasant trips they have had together, the many beautiful villages they have seen in their rambles, and which is the pleasantest road to take if you wish to reach them. Wonderful things have these two happy old fellows seen in their travels: nests, and snakes, and water-newts, and great gledes, that carried off young chickens. They have chased young foxes and hunted young hares, and taken rooks' nests from the topmost branches of many a tall elm-tree; and when they could get no work in autumn, you never saw what quantities of brown nuts and ripe blackberries they would bring home. No two boys were ever happier than they are when out in the country together.

But I must tell you, that when the Village Club-Feast is held at the public-house, the village school-children will also have their holyday, and go to church; and then come back

to the school-room, where they will have tea and plum-cake. Oh! how you would laugh to see those little rustics sit down to tea, many of them for the first time in their lives placed before a cup and saucer, and never having been used to any thing but their brown porringer and wooden spoon, from which they ate and drank their bread and milk. Poor little fellows! they will take hold of the saucer with both hands, and blow away, with swollen cheeks, until their tea is cool enough, and bite such mouthfuls out of their great plum-cakes, that it would delight you to watch them. Then, it would amuse you to see them in the evening, playing at

KISS IN THE RING

on the village green. All the boys and girls will take hold of hands and form a ring, leaving some girl or boy outside, who will walk round and round, and at length strike some one smartly on the back; then run in and out between the uplifted

and open arms of those who form the ring, darting across the center, and out on the opposite side; now threading their way in a zigzag form, then shooting across again, and baffling the pursuer, who is compelled to follow the course of the leader, who, if she be a light-built girl, will lead the rustic youth a long chase before he can win the kiss which is his reward for overtaking her; for sometimes the girls in the ring, although they leave ample room enough for their fair companion, will lower their arms, or stand closer, when her pursuer has to pass; thus giving her time to make a turning or two which he has not seen; and if he once passes through a wrong opening, he is out, and must pay a forfeit. Some are of opinion, that this is the old English game which is so often made mention of in our earlier poets; and, from the passages I have met with in their writings, I have come to the same conclusion.

Country feasts, and all such like merry-makings, are generally attended by some oddity or another; and I well remember a man called Soft Jimmy, who visited all the country wakes for miles around. He used to say, when asked where he lived, "that he was like a dog, and had his home everywhere." His residence was, I believe, in a neighboring workhouse, from which they allowed him to go out whenever he pleased. They never could get him to work, for he was a sad lazy fellow. If they set him to weed the garden, he was sure to pull up all the flowers, and leave the weeds; and when they spoke to him about it, he only said, "What can you expect from Soft Jimmy?" If they made him turn the grindstone, he would always turn it from the man sharpening his tools: if the grinder changed sides, so did Jimmy; he never would turn it the right way. One day he found a sixpence, and the man who saw him pick it up said, "I've lost one." "But had yours a hole in it?" said Jimmy, looking at the sixpence in his hand. "Yes," answered the man

at a venture. "Then mine has not," said soft Jimmy, chuckling with delight. But Jimmy was once taken in. He was too fond of cold gin-and-water, and one day asked a farmer to treat him. "If you'll go home with me," said the farmer, "I'll give you as much as you can drink, Jimmy." Soft Jimmy ran for a mile or two beside the farmer's horse; and when they reached the farmhouse, the farmer called for a pail of water, into which he poured a small glass of gin, telling Jimmy, when he had finished that he should have another. "He was too sharp for me that time," said Jimmy. But Soft Jimmy took the farmer in afterward. He was asked to run an errand, and the reward was to be as much bread and cheese as he could eat. Jimmy carried off the remainder of the cheese and the large brown loaf, saying no time was mentioned, and if he could not eat it all that day he could the next. The good-natured farmer laughed, and, in consideration of the trick he had played him, let Jimmy off with the plunder. Poor fellow! although he but aped softness, and pretended not to be right sharp, that he might live in laziness, yet he became a senseless idiot at last, and died in the true character which he had so long assumed—a warning which ought not to be lost upon us. Were I writing a maudlin book, I might make a long sermon on the fate of Soft Jimmy; but I trust I am writing for fine, manly-hearted boys, who, if they assume any thing at all, it will be a character of noble manliness—a something beyond, rather than behind, their capabilities.

Pleasant, too, was sheep-washing and sheep-shearing time; such a dreamy bleating beside the brooks and about the barns, as the sheep and lambs answered each other from the wattled fences in which they were confined to keep them separate;—rare fun was it for us to pull and drag at some great, fat, heavy sheep, and, drawing it toward the water's edge, shove it in, and perhaps ourselves with it, while the sheep-washer

stood ready to souse the moving mass of wool head over ears. To see how he seized the sheep by the saturated wool, gave it a push, and sent it along swimming to the next washer, who, having given it a second immersion, sent it swimming onward toward the third; and he, after a finishing plunge, left it to find its way to its bleating and dripping companions, who, congregated together on an adjacent bank, seemed complaining to each other of the ill usage they had undergone. Many a tug and pull have we had at those sturdy sheep, our hands oily through dragging at their hot fleeces, as we compelled them to undergo a thorough washing; and reasoning with them in our way, as Shakspeare's Lance did to his dog, "Come along with you," we used to say, "you great, big, woolly brute; I'm sure you must almost be sweltered to death in that close, thick, oily fleece; surely you can't grumble at being washed once a-year, to make you clean, and sweet, and decent; how ever you can stand in the summer sunshine with all that wool on you, I don't know; I'm sure, if I was wrapped in such a hot, shaggy coat, such weather as this, I should swale away like a candle in an oven on baking-day. Come along with you, and don't stand there making such a noise as that; you'll feel as comfortable again after you've had a ducking or two in the brook; and as for your wool, why you'll look as if you'd got a new suit on, or eaten nothing all the summer but snow-white daisies and May blossoms."

But kind words had no effect upon them, so we were compelled to follow the example of our excellent schoolmaster, who, when he found that persuasion and forbearance wouldn't do at all, had recourse to what seldom or never failed, and that was a little rude, downright force. The washing once over, and the sheep having stayed a few days, just to let the wool regain its old, oily elasticity, so that, as the clippers say, they may shear all the softer, then the great summer sheep-shearing began in earnest. The huge, high,

heavy, ponderous barn-doors were taken off their hinges, and placed on strong, low tressels, or heavy logs of wood, to elevate the doors to a convenient height, and on these ample tables the sunbrowned shearers clipped the bleating sheep. Oh! it was famous fun to see them clipping away, one against the other, and striving who could get done first, to roll up the fleeces and carry them into the barn, until we raised up quite a stack of wool—then to have a swing suspended from the great, high rafters of the barn, and go such a height, ah! that was swinging indeed—then to roll all among the wool—to fetch the sheep up to the shearers—to turn them loose again after they were clipped, and watch how the lambs were puzzled to pick out their dams from the flock which had been shorn; you would have liked to have been there, amid all that bleating of sheep, and barking of dogs, and such racing as we had after the sheep that ran away; it was prime sport, I can tell you. But the best of all was the sheep-shearing feast—such bowls of furmenty stuffed full of currants, as you never before saw in your life, and chines of beef seasoned with all kinds of nice herbs, which are only known to old-fashioned country people; great horns of ale, and glorious plum-puddings, almost as much as a boy could lift. Then, it was so pleasant to remember that these sheep-shearing feasts are hundreds and hundreds of years old, and that we read all about them in the Holy Bible, and what Nabal's wife, who lived in Carmel, sent to King David when she kept up her sheep-shearing feast. There are many good old customs still existing in England, as we shall show before we have written all we intend to write about the four seasons of the year.

But the village feast has brought to my mind old Abraham Axby, a fine, tall, straight, silver-haired old soldier, who had fought in several engagements, and returned to his native village in his old age, to enjoy a comfortable pension. It

has, I fear, been the lot of but few boys to have a companion and a friend like this honorable old English soldier. Although sixty years of age, he was as much a boy at heart as the youngest of us; and in the summer season his greatest delight was to take some refreshment in a basket, a bottle of ale, his tinder-box, pipe, and tobacco, and spend the livelong day in rambling far away from house and home, among the hills and woods. Many and many a day have I been his only companion. Oh, what a delicious, gipsy-like kind of life it was! and he was acquainted with almost every tree that grew; every wild flower, or nearly, that blowed; knew a bird by its note, and could tell by their song whether they had young ones or not. What have we not seen in those great forest-like woods in a summer's day? Warton Wood, which was five miles wide and seven miles long; where we have started a polecat, that has been devouring a rabbit; chased young foxes into their holes; seen weasels, and snakes, and otters, by the brook; water-rats and efts, and dark, venomous vipers; toads, so black, and such a size; ravens with great horny beaks, and owls horrible to look upon; with hawks almost as big as eagles; and, above all, a large tree with ten herons' nests on it. Then that old soldier was so brave, that I do not believe he would have run away, no, not if even a wolf had made its appearance. A wolf! why he had seen wolves abroad, had heard them howl around the camp through the long, dark night which closed over the hard-fought battle-field. Oh! what marvels he used to recount, as he sat on the root of some antique oak, smoking his pipe, and narrating his hair-breadth escapes in flood and field.

The great green solitudes of the woods seemed to have a strange charm for the brave old veteran; he loved to hear the cooing of the ringdove, the dreamy rustling of the long leaves, and the murmur of the woodland brook; and sometimes I have seen him steal away, while he thought the tall

underwood would conceal him from my view, and there I have noticed him, unobserved, kneeling down on the velvet moss to pray. Since those days I have often thought that, perchance, the old soldier had slain some brother-man in battle, and that his conscience had accused him of the deed, and he found it hard to reconcile his duty to his country with his duty to God, who has so solemnly forbidden the shedding of human blood. Such thoughts passed not through my mind while I was but a boy, but they have done many a time since then. My acquaintance with that old soldier was the means of my knowing hundreds of things which are to be found in the country, which I might not but for him have understood. He talked, and I gladly listened; and he had at home many a good old-fashioned Herbal, and many a volume of Natural History, the plates of which he taught me to copy; thus rendering out-of-door objects familiar to my sight before I had attained my twelfth year. I knew wood-betony from the dead-nettle; could tell agrimony though I stood yards off, and knew how to make it into "tea," a common beverage even to this hour among country people. Oh, what bundles of herbs we used to gather! if they possessed but half the virtues attributed to them by the gray-haired veteran, mankind would have but little need of doctors. Then he was so clever at "liming" sticks for birds; could catch the old one whenever he wished to carry it home along with the young ones: and as for moles, if he once stuck a stick and a string in the ground, next morning the "moldwarp," as he called it, was almost sure to be there.

Then he knew such a deal about England hundreds of years ago, and old English forests when they abounded with wolves, and wild boars, and great stags, which kings hunted, and Robin Hood chased; would tell me, if we had been found in those forests in former days, how we should have been outlawed and proclaimed, and dragged before the court of Eyre, and the

claws cut off our dog's feet, and even hung, if we had shot a stag which the king had proclaimed free. It was only in after-days, when I had read Manwood's History of Forest Laws, that I found all these marvelous things to be true. He told me how, in that age, men were imprisoned for trespassing on the forest boundary, although there was no mark to tell them where the forest line began nor where it ended; perhaps a mill stood here, and a mile or two farther off a great oak-tree; and there was not even a footpath to tell you when you stepped within the forbidden mark, as you traversed the immense space betwixt the two objects. It seemed as if the Verderers, or Agistors (for such names were the gamekeepers called in those days), could imprison you whenever they pleased. And right glad was I to find, in the old ballads, how Robin Hood and his merry men rose up, and, in defiance of these cruel laws, slaughtered the deer, and opposed the proud Normans, and preferred leading a wild life in the forests to eating the bread of slavery under such stern taskmasters. And you would not believe how the poor were ground down, and what they had to endure, and how they could find no redress for the wrongs inflicted upon them by the rich, unless you were to read some good History of England which treats of the manners and customs of that period.

Oh, what a great change has England undergone since Abraham Axby lived! Steamboats were talked of then as wonderful things, which would go against the tide without sails, or without losing much ground. Railways were undreamed of, except the common tram-ways at the collieries, sent down an inclined plain, and drawn up by an engine stationary on the hill, and a strong rope. The market-boat, hauled by a horse or two men, traveled at the rate of two miles and a half in the hour. To hear from America, was indeed tidings from an invisible world; while India, laid far away under the sun, a burning-hot far-off country, from whence, we believed in those days, no traveler returned. But now there is scarcely

a boy among you who has not heard of railway trains running at the rate of fifty miles an hour; of steamers crossing the Atlantic Ocean in sixteen days; and of letters coming from India to England within the space of a month: while I, who boasted at twelve of knowing wood-betony and agrimony, should be puzzled with the first lesson a mere child who is learning botany masters in its earliest exercise.

And during my rambles with the old soldier, we used to see weasels, and stoats, and martins, which build their nests in holes in banks, or in the hollow places of trees; and kill hares and rabbits, catch birds, and destroy their eggs, plunder henroosts, and think nothing of putting a large turkey to death in an instant! Oh! they are a destructive race of little savages are these; and one has been known, before now, to attack a child in its cradle, and inflict a deep wound upon its neck, where it clung, and sucked like a leech—for they are fond of blood, and to obtain this they will sometimes destroy a whole henroost, not caring to feed upon the bodies of the poultry which they have killed. Some of these are red, some brown; and they are said to change their color in the winter. They will climb trees, attack the old bird on its nest, suck the eggs, or carry off the young; for nothing seems to come amiss to them. They are also great hunters after and destroyers of mice, and their long, slender bodies are well adapted to follow these destructive little animals through their runs in cornstacks; thus rendering the farmer good service occasionally, although they never ask him to reward them with a duck or a chicken, but, whenever they see a chance, help themselves without his consent. Oh! if you could but see one attack a mouse!—just one single bite of the head, which is done in a moment, and which pierces the brain, and before you can say "Jack Robinson" the mouse is as dead as a red herring, for it has neither time to squeak nor struggle. It is no joke, I can tell you, to be bitten by a weasel; and if you thought, when you caught hold of him by the back, you had

him safe, you would soon find your mistake out, for his neck is as pliable as India-rubber, and he would have hold of your hand in a moment. What think you of a great sharp-beaked

HAWK POUNCING UPON A WEASEL,

and flying up with him into the air to carry him off to his nest, thinking to himself, no doubt, "I've caught you at last, my young gentleman; you've eaten many a bird in your day, but I'll eat you now." "Thank you for nothing," said the weasel, as he rode, not very comfortably, between the claws of the hawk; "two can play at that game, Mr. Hawk; and

if you mean feasting on me, I don't see why I shouldn't have a taste of you;" so he twisted round his elastic neck, poked up his pointed nose, and in he went, with his sharp teeth, right under the wings of the hawk, making such a hole, in an instant, that you might have thrust your finger in. The hawk tried to pick at him with his hooked beak, but it was no use: the weasel kept eating away, and licking his lips as if he enjoyed himself; and the hawk soon came wheeling down to the ground, which he no sooner touched than away ran the weasel, with his belly full, and not a bit the worse for the ride, while Mr. Hawk lay there as dead as a nail. Wasn't the biter nicely bit! And what I've told you is quite true, and was witnessed by a gentleman, at Bloxworth, in Dorsetshire. Only let a dog come near its nest, and see what the weasel will do if it's got young ones. Out it will rush, and fasten on the dog's nose in an instant, and there it will hang, although it is such a little thing, not above seven or eight inches long.

Nor is the weasel the only courageous creature of this species, for when a

STOAT

once gets hold of a hare it's all over with him, I can tell you;

it's no use the hare running off, for wherever he goes there the stoat is hanging at his throat, and the hare seems to know well enough it's all up with him, so hops off for a few yards, and then gives it up for a bad job. There isn't a bolder little beast of its size in England than the stoat. If the prey it is pursuing takes to the water, after him goes the stoat, for it can swim like a water-rat; and if even it loses sight of the game it is in pursuit of, it can still follow it by the scent. What would you think of a great, ugly fellow coming into your house some cold winter's morning, eating you up, and then taking possession of it as if it was his own? This is the way the brute of a stoat sometimes serves the poor blind mole; he walks into his house, without either making him a bow or saying "How do you do?" eats up the poor mole for breakfast, then creeps into its nest, and has a comfortable nap, as if he'd a right to it. I wonder how he would like a good wire-haired terrier to serve him the same trick; and you may depend upon it, were one only to catch him, he would, and, although it would be very cruel, I couldn't feel much sorrow for the stoat after all.

One among the many of our boyish haunts was the Old Hall, a large, desolate building, which it was our delight to ramble over. Through the center, and under the middle of the wings, spanned great, gloomy archways; and dark, ruined stair-cases went winding up into turrets, and into huge moldering rooms, which, when we shouted, sent back strange echoes that would have turned the cheek of a timid boy pale only to have heard them. In and out were grim, carved heads, monsters whose living likeness never moved upon earth, with eyes on each side of their mouths, and arms growing out of their cheeks, all cut in gray, old granite, and looking terrible when the shadows of evening settled down upon them, or the moonlight streamed down in streaks of white, making lighter the portions it fell upon, or steeping the shadows in blacker

hues. A desolate and silent awe hung about the place when you entered it: it seemed like treading the dominions of the dead. All around told of an age which had departed. Above were banqueting-rooms, and wide passages, and deep bay-windows, which had been trod by many an armed baron in the days of yore. Below were dungeons, dark, and deep, and cold, and dismal; and as you walked over the floors above, the echoing sound of your footsteps fell low, and lonely, and melancholy, and made you feel sad and thoughtful without knowing why. In some ruinous oriel, far beyond our reach, the sun still glittered on remnants of painted glass, the head of a saint, or a serpent; gaudy hues of gold, and purple, and crimson, reflected for a moment on the dark oaken floor, or the blackened and ruinous wall. And a thousand old traditions hung about the place, of maidens who have been shut up and imprisoned in those dizzy turrets; of warriors who have been chained to the walls of those damp dungeons, in which rusty helmets, and coats of mail, and dead men's bones, have been found; then there were subterraneous passages, such as may be seen even in this day at Eltham Palace, entered by secret doors, which went deep and dark underground below the moat, and into what once had been the ancient garden beyond. And while wandering over this solemn and ruinous place, many a scene rose before us which we had read of in the history of our country, and many a form seemed to pass by whose shadow darkens the annals of England; for, during the Wars of the Roses, it had stood a stormy siege, and every yard of ground that stood about it had been contested inch by inch. The invader's trumpet had rung through those gloomy gateways; archers had shot from the narrow loopholes of those turrets; cross-bowmen had manned those battlements; the drawbridge, which had crumbled into ruins ages ago, had been lowered from that sally-port; and across that moat had the mailed ranks rushed, with sword and battle-ax, struggling foot

to foot, and hand to hand, until driven back again by the invaders, when the sharp-toothed and grated portcullis dropped amid the thunder of its grating and grinding chains. We seemed, while wandering through those ruins, to be living among the Plantagenets and the Tudors, when the business of life was divided into battles and bloodshed, to hunting the deer in the broad, unbounded forests, the chanting of matin and vesper, and the processions of solemn monks through the long aisles of old cathedrals. Every hall, every chamber, and every turret, had its legend; and in one of the latter tradition had laid the scene of a tragical story, which had been handed down from sire to son through many generations, and which they believed to be as true as that the gray old turret itself was still in existence. In that old hall John of Gaunt had once resided; his armorial bearings are yet carved in a dozen places. His daughter had been carried off by a young knight who lived in a neighboring castle, the foundations of which alone are now visible. She was pursued and overtaken before she had reached the stronghold of her lover, brought back by her father, and by him imprisoned in the central turret. A few hours after, the old castle was besieged by a troop of horsemen: John of Gaunt and his followers were compelled to flee, and leave the fortress in the hands of the invaders. Amid the struggle the prisoner in the turret was forgotten. Days passed away, and the conquerors, unconscious of her presence, left her unknowingly to perish; nor was it until her father had returned with a strong reinforcement, and again driven the besiegers from his stronghold, that her fate became known. You may readily imagine the effect that a visit to the top of that tower had on us, imaginative boys. We used to wonder to ourselves in which corner she was found dead; how her father looked, and what he said, when he burst open the door of the tower; whether there was nothing in the apartment by which she might have clambered up to those loopholes,

and made her wants known. These and a hundred similar thoughts used to cross our minds whenever we visited that spot. Although we made sad havoc of history, confusing dates and periods, mingling all sorts of arms and architecture together, making crusaders of the Saxons, and putting the Normans in battle against the Danes; still these very errors were of use in after-days, compelling us to look more narrowly into the written annals of our country, and causing us to become better acquainted with the events which really had occurred amid such scenes and ruins as these.

The very act of climbing up those dark, winding, and wandering stair-cases required no small courage; and no boy who was in heart a coward would have dared to have hidden himself alone when we played at "Hide and seek," in that great, rambling, and deserted building. Not that there is any thing to fear in such places—no more than there is in one's own home, unless it is to slip through some hole; although foolish old nurses will tell you all sorts of tales, about ghosts, and spirits, and such like nonsense, all of which are false stories, and which you will laugh at as you grow older. True enough, we used to frighten one another, sometimes, by concealing ourselves, and making all kinds of awful noises; and one night I remember two of us hiding in one of the turrets, and seeing, amid the darkness, a pair of great eyes fixed upon us; then there was a flapping of wings, a loud "too-whoo, too-whoo, tu-whit, tu-woo-woo," and out of the ruined window sailed a great gray owl. Owls, and a few bats and jackdaws, were the only ghosts we ever met with in that desolate mansion; and we dare say that if all the stories which are told could be proved, such as these would be found to make up the bulk of spirits which are said to "haunt the night," and would turn out to be all fables and falsehoods.

"Cuckoo! cuckoo!" That hath ever seemed to us the oldest of all summer sounds. "Cuckoo—cuckoo" it still sings as

it alights upon the silver-stemmed birch, the color of whose bark matches the sober hue of the bird's plumage. Who, unless they knew, would credit that such a little red mouth could make itself heard for a full mile round? Strange things do they tell of that noisy ash-colored bird, with its black and white tail, of laying its eggs in the nests of other birds, and that even the young of

THE CUCKOO.

when hatched (a fearless usurper, like its parent, of all rights), will throw out the naked brood amid which it has been nursed. One naturalist has recorded, from his own observation, that he saw a cuckoo's egg in a hedge-sparrow's nest, and that in a short time a young cuckoo and two sparrows were hatched, which he saw in the nest together; that in the evening of the same day the two young hedge-sparrows were excluded, and the cuckoo the sole occupant of their house. This the cuckoo accomplishes by working itself to the very bottom of the nest, until feeling one of the young ones on its back, it then, by a sudden jerk, throws out the callow brood upon the ground. That the cuckoo returns again, and feeds and rears

its young, is the opinion of many, although we believe that it is left to the mercy of the stranger-bird whose young it has destroyed. I well remember once seeing a cuckoo attack the nests of several swallows, in an old town in Lincolnshire. The song of a cuckoo heard ringing in a market-place, could not fail of drawing the attention of many of the inhabitants. It flew from nest to nest, pursued by the whole congregation of swallows, who seemed determined to wage war against this common enemy; and after several fruitless attempts to deposit its egg in the nests of the swallows, the cuckoo, pursued by the whole colony for some distance, at length flew across the river, and was lost amid the distant scenery. I have often wished that it had succeeded in leaving its egg behind in any one of the swallows' nests, in order that I might have had proof whether it returned to feed and rear its young.

But see what a beautiful scene is this stretching beside the village and beyond the river! What a picturesque appearance has that row of stately elms which overhang the footpath along the bank! What a noble sweep the river takes at the foot of those hills, below which it curves its long arm, then dwindles away in the perspective, and is lost amid the wooded distance! Here sheep bleat, and jingle their musical bells as they crop the wild thyme from the bee-haunted hillocks, or browse among the luxuriant clover in the neighboring pastures. Knee-deep, the plump-sided oxen graze, or, chewing the cud, lie half-buried among the flowers of summer. The heavy wagon, with its gray tilt, rumbles slowly along up the steep acclivity, on whose summit stands the old mill, its rent sails turning round with a lazy motion, as if half-hesitating whether it should stand still or move. Here and there we see figures crossing the landscape, the angler with his wicker basket borne on the but-end of the fishing-rod, which rests upon his shoulder, moving leisurely along the bank, or pausing every now

and then, as if selecting some favorite spot for the morrow's sport. The woodman, in his forest-stained dress, followed by his faithful dog, and bearing the bundle of fagots upon his back, which he will add to the great pile already reared up beside his hut, and stored to meet the yet distant winter. You hear the song of the milkmaid, and can just see the white kit which she balances on her head, beside the long hedgerow by which she is passing. The red cow which she has left in the meadow stands lowing beside the gate; a calm beauty hangs about the deep blue of the heavens, while the earth is steeped in the golden splendor of an unclouded sunshine. The breeze scarcely awakens a ripple upon the river, more than is made by the swallow when she stoops down and laves her breast as she flies. The willows beside the bank bend with a gentle and dreamy motion, as if composing their feathery heads to sleep; and the little ripples creep so feebly upon the shore, that they scarcely rock the slender reeds which skirt the lowest slope of the water-course. The whole scene is broken into beautiful little pictures, every one of which a good artist might transfer to canvas, and hang his studio with a hundred morsels of landscape.

What a blessing it is to be born in a country like England, where green hills tower, wild woods wave, and clear rivers flow through hundreds of miles of sweet pastoral scenery—where men dare give utterance to their thoughts, and no one, unless he is mean enough to do so, need become the slave of opinion—where oppression and wrong are dragged forth into the light of day, and no matter how high may be the rank, or great the wealth of the offender, they can not protect him from public censure—where talent can take its proud stand beside title, and the highest offices in the realm have been obtained by men who had no renowned ancestry to boast of. These things ought to make every English boy feel proud of his country; not for its conquests abroad, but the great moral

changes which have been wrought by the lovers of peace, who have done their duty at home. It is my task to draw your attention to peaceful England, to its rural homesteads and green secluded places, not to what is misnamed its glorious victories and splendid conquests; for, however stirring may be the accounts of the many great battles we have won, you must ever bear in mind that such painful triumphs were purchased by leaving many a poor child fatherless and many a fond mother a widow; that the sound of the trumpet, the neighing of the war-horse, and the thundering roll of artillery, were accompanied with the groans and heart-rending shrieks of dying men—some left all night to bleed to death on the battle-field, others speechless and perishing for want of water, and writhing in agony, crushed by wheels and the hoofs of horses, which, during the retreat or pursuit, had passed over them. Such are the miseries by which great victories are won. Remember, that to cultivate the arts of peace, to instruct, and enlighten, and better the morals and circumstances of your fellow-men, is to win the admiration of the truly good; that war, even in a just cause, is a dreadful scourge and a fearful evil; and he who endeavors to unite nation to nation in a common brotherhood will be able to look death in the face more boldly than the bravest warrior that ever shed human blood. A courageous heart never covets a quarrel, but is ever ready when danger appears; a brave man would die in the defense of his children, in protecting his own home; and he would also sooner die than destroy the home of another who had done him no injury. War would soon cease if those who love it were left to fight it out among themselves.

See where that volume of smoke rises above the faded gold of the furz-bushes, twisting and coiling its spiral column of intense blue through the wide-spreading and forked branches of the ancient oak, like a cloud that has lost its way, and is struggling to regain its place again in the floating marble of

heaven. Saw ye that little ragged boy, whose face is the color of a ripe hazelnut, peep out from beneath the underwood? Depend upon it we are nearing the neighborhood of

A GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.

and it was the smoke of their camp-fire which we saw in the distance, blending so beautifully with the foliage of the old oak. It seems to have been washing-day with them. I wonder what a London laundress would think of the color of their linen! and yet where in the world could we find a sweeter drying-ground than the corner of this wide wood? or wish for better air than blows across the broad and open common? Into what a number of little pictures the foreground of the forest is broken!—children playing at "Hide and Seek" among the fan-like leaves of the fern, and behind the prickly gorse-bushes—donkeys turned loose, and grazing here and there, free to choose their pasturage wherever they please—masses of yellow and white drapery hung out to dry, and fluttering from every bush around the encampment—here a dog half-asleep, and there a sunburnt Gipsy, leaning on his elbow and side, and

while he smokes his pipe, watching the old woman in the red cloak, who is attending to the contents which simmer in the large iron pot suspended from three stakes above the fragrant wood-fire. Even the gray blankets which form the arched roofs of their low tents stand out in rich contrast beside the wide underwood and the deep background of trees, beyond which the eye falls upon interminable vistas of forest scenery. There is scarcely a linnet's nest in that wide range of furz and fern undiscovered by those ragged Gipsy boys; and whenever they have heard the ringdove coo in the wood, they have set out and looked up almost every tall tree, to see if they could not descry the two white eggs shining through the lattice-like floor of its open nest; and when once they saw a bird, if there was no stone at hand, they would throw up the first heavy clod or dry stick they came near, with so sure an aim that, unless the feathered chorister took to its wings, it was almost certain of being brought to the ground. A wild, lawless, and merry life do these Gipsys lead; sheltering, wherever they can, in the towns in winter, and in summer-time establishing their residence by the side of a wood, at the corner of a common, or in the picturesque nook of some desolate heath,—taking care, however, never to be beyond the sound of the cock-crow of some neighboring village. Many a silly country maiden parts with her hard-earned shilling that she may have her fortune told by the swarthy and keen-eyed Gipsy, who slyly pockets the money, and afterward laughs at her folly, trying hard at the same time to beg the very gown off the country girl's back. They would promise that either you or I should one day inherit an estate worth ten thousand a-year, were we only to give them sixpence, and allow them to examine the lines on the palm of the hand; and when they returned to their camp, they would show the silver coin, and exclaim, "Fools and their money are soon parted." And yet there are many so foolish as to believe that the Gipsys can tell their fortunes,

and well do they deserve to lose their money and be laughed at for being such simpletons.

Although, as I have before said, spring is the season when birds build, and when we shall have so much to say about their nests, yet I am sure you will be pleased with what I shall tell you about the bottle-tit, or, as we used to call it, the pudding-poke, a name no doubt derived from the peculiar form of its nest. What think you of its laying from twelve to twenty eggs, each of which is not larger than a horse-bean? I remember myself taking a nest in Park-house Lane, near Gainsborough, which contained fifteen beautiful white and spotted eggs: a number that, if weighed, would be nearly twice the weight of the bird. You would be delighted to watch a regiment of these little fellows marching up a tree: they seem to be playing the game of "Follow my Leader;" and there is no harm in believing that birds have their games as well as boys. Away goes one little tit up a branch, followed by a whole string of tits, and as he runs along, he keeps crying, "Twit, twit, twit!" and I have no doubt he means to say, "Now, my little bottle-tits, come along, don't be frightened if you slip, you have only to open your wings and you are safe; a little higher, my dears, up under that broad roof of leaves, right over this nice soft moss. Oh la! it is rather too dark here, and the leaves are so close together that I can not see the sunshine through them; a little higher, my dears."—"Twit, twit," they answer. —"A little exercise will do us no harm this fine morning. Isn't this a nice spot? but, oh dear! there are so many of you behind that I must keep moving to make room for you, and really I think it's more pleasant at the top than it is here; we shall have such a beautiful prospect on the topmost branches, and there will be plenty of room for us there, you know; and then I can look round upon you, and pay my respects to you all." "Twit, twit," say they; and up they go to the very summit, among the sunshine and the glittering leaves;

and when they are too warm they come hopping down again; and then, as if they did not know their own minds for a minute together, away they start, with a "twit, twit, twit," for the top again; and so they play with one another all day long.

And this little bird builds such a curious nest—supposing you doubled both your hands, and placed them one above another, and could make them perfectly round: well, that would be about the shape and size of a nest; and if you opened one finger to make a hole at the side, that would be like the place in which the pudding-poke enters its nest. But I can not make you understand how beautifully and curiously it is woven together; first it takes a soft green moss, then speckles it outside with that rich, flaky stuff which you see on the stems of trees or old railings, and which is called lichen, or liverwort, though boys would call it rough white moss; then it takes the egg-nests of spiders, and these are drawn out and imbedded among the wool, looking, when you stretch the nest, like ropy bread in hot weather. Well, when all this is done, she covers it over at the top to keep out the wet, and uses such moss as comes nearest in color to the branches amid which it is built: then comes a beautiful lining of soft, small feathers, which, if taken out and spread upon a table, would astonish you; you would scarcely credit that so large a quantity could be compressed into so small a compass. If as many young ones are hatched as there are eggs, I can not tell how the old birds can get to feed them; one would fancy that they must lie one on the top of the other, like a swarm of bees when they alight; and that in hot weather, and in so warm a retreat, there must, we imagine, be many deaths in so large a family from suffocation alone. I forgot to tell you that this is one of the least of British birds, the golden-crested wren being the only one known that is smaller. Oh how little do we know of the habits and customs of the birds and animals which we are accustomed to see almost every day—how little

of His wisdom who suffereth not a sparrow to fall to the ground unheeded! The dispensations of an all-wise Providence are as yet a mystery to man. Naturalists may study and write, and the more they learn, the more they find to marvel at: the paths of knowledge seem to lead only nearer unto God, and the clearer our understanding, the greater is our astonishment at the wonders wrought by His own Almighty Hand.

But our ramble round the wood, and from the Gipsy camp, has again brought us beside the river, though at a point which we have not before visited. The corner of that shelving bank, which partly fronts the wooden bridge, and overhangs the mouth of the deep water-course, by which the wide marshes are drained, was for several years haunted by a large

OTTER.

Many a time, concealed behind the rushes, have I watched its motions in the water, as it swam about on the surface or dived beneath in pursuit of fish. Beautiful were its actions, stemming the current, or gliding down with the stream—for of all swimmers, its attitude is perhaps the most elegant. It was wonderful to watch how suddenly it would leave off its

play, disappear under the water in an instant the moment it saw a fish gliding beneath, and rise again, after it had caught it, at a considerable distance from the spot where it first dived. Beautiful must its motions have been beneath the water, could we but have seen it shooting to and fro, up and down in every direction: now against the current, then off like an arrow with the stream, just as the fish darted about and endeavored in vain to escape. Then to watch it bearing its prey to the shore, and holding the fish in its paws, when it would begin at the head, and eat its way downward, until only the tail of the fish was left. Many a chase had we after him, with our dogs; and fine sport it was when he took to the water, and baffled his pursuers by diving; sometimes keeping under until their patience was exhausted, or rising, unawares, at the most unexpected spot, to breathe; and more than one unfortunate dog has he dragged with him under the water, and would speedily have drowned it, had not the alarmed brute loosed his hold while under, and swam, half-breathless, to the shore. It is stated that the otter will sometimes drive a whole shoal of fish before it, circling round them as he swims, until, finding that they can not escape, they will throw themselves out of the water upon the shore. The form of the otter is well adapted for swimming, with its long flattened body and broad tail, by which it steers itself as with a rudder, while its legs are short, and capable of being turned every way; and in addition to all these admirable qualifications for swimming, it is also web-footed. Its head is broad and flat; its upper lip thick, with the eyes placed very near the nostrils; its color is a dim, whitish gray varying into brownish tints underneath. There are numerous instances on record of this animal having been tamed, and taught to catch and bring home fish. What boy would not like to have a tame otter? which he might teach to fetch and carry the same as a dog does. What an agreeable companion one would be to ramble with by a river side; to

see him plunge in head foremost every now and then, and bring out a large fish between his teeth, lay it at your feet, and start off again until he had provided enough for a family dinner? Would it not be a treat, when rambling some fine morning between the slope of the river and the shelving bank, to discover an otter's nest, with three or four young ones, lying snugly among the grass and reeds in some hole, or under the hollow roots of a tree; to bring them home, and feed them, at first with small fish, then by degrees diet them on bread and milk; and oh, what a proud day it would be when they had grown big enough, to give them names, and to see each one come as it was called; to take them out for a run on the river bank; to see them rush into the water, head over ears, one after the other, and each to return with a fine fish in its teeth? This would be something to talk about; and what boy would not be proud to become the possessor of a little pack of otters?

But lest I should weary you with too many descriptions of birds and animals, and trees and flowers, and other country scenes, I will tell you about a poor boy whom I knew; and who, having lost his parents, set about providing for himself, and by his own exertions obtained a livelihood. After his father and mother died, he got a situation under a fishmonger, where he was employed to carry home the fish purchased by customers. But this was only for a short time, until the boy whom he had succeeded recovered from illness. He had, however, given such satisfaction to his employer by his industry and attention, that the fishmonger lent him a basket, and allowing him a profit of a penny or two on each pair of soles, or whatever fish he might sell, thus gave him a chance of doing the best he could for himself. By great care and perseverance he soon became master of a few shillings, and now began to speculate, buying at times a whole fish of his employer, and running the risk of selling it. And now you

might see him sometimes set off in a morning with a whole codfish or a whole salmon in his basket, together with his large knife and scales, and as ready to cut six ounces as six pounds, to accommodate his customers; and thus he would come and go several times in a day, sometimes getting rid of two or three large fish. By degrees his customers began to tell him overnight what they should like for the next day; and as he found his old master occasionally supplying him with very indifferent fish, he began to think whether he could not find a better market, and so deal at the first hand. This he named to several of his friends, and at last it reached the ears of a captain belonging to one of the steamers, who told him that he would give him a run to Hull and back for nothing when he liked; and that, when there, he might purchase at the best market; and more than this, he lent little Bob a sovereign. "Poor lad!" said he, "he never ate a crust but what he earned since his parents died, and he ought to be encouraged." The next day saw Bob a regular fishmonger. One neighbor lent him an old white deal table, to place his stock upon; another, a washtub, in which to keep his clean water; and there, at the end of the court in which he was born, in the wide, open street, along which scores of passengers passed every hour, did Bob open his new establishment. A proud day was it for him, I can tell you! Oh! you should have seen him with his little blue apron on, and his cold, red hands, wielding his long, sharp knife, and scraping some fresh, silver-looking fish with the edge of it, or wiping another down gently with his clean cloth, as he pointed out to his customers the freshness of this, the plumpness of that, the bright eyes of a third, the red gills of a fourth; then adding, with pride, "I bought them out of the fishing-boats myself, just as they came in, an hour or two after they'd been caught!" Before night he sold every fish. Not an ounce was left; and his customers declared that what they had purchased was much fresher and

sweeter than they had ever had of his old master. After a few more trips to Hull, he attracted the attention of a fisherman whom he had several times dealt with, and who, having a large family of his own, said, "Thee beest but a little 'un to begin for theysen; and, between thee and me and the captain, I think I might manage to look thee out a little lot every morning, and send them down by the first steamboat, so that thou'd have 'em fresh and nice; and soe save thee all this hallacksing and trapassing up and down, which I see no mander o' use in; and it would do thee a deal o' good, lad, and me no harm. Captain would be good enough to bring the money back;" and so it was arranged; and every morning, regularly as the day came, there was little Bob to be seen on the steam-packet wharf, with the truck he had borrowed, and plenty of good-natured sailors ready to help him ashore with his hamper of fish; for he was such a little one, and had neither father nor mother, that almost any body would assist him without being asked. And now the white deal table was found too little, and he had to borrow another. Then a butcher, who had given up standing in the market, said, "He had got an old stall he could sell him cheap; true, one of the tressels wanted a leg, and the front pole was missing; but old Hack, the joiner, would put that to rights for a shilling; and the price of the stall would be—why—some morning when he happened to have in a stock of fish, he might send him a 'boiling' for dinner." So Bob agreed; and the captain of the steamer had an old sail, which he said "was about worn out; true, there was a hole or two in it, but he might give old Betty Buttery a bit of fish to set a patch or two on, and it would make a capital tilt for his stall, to keep the sun off his fish." And so Bob got on, bit by bit, step by step, from a stall to a shop; from bowling a truck to keeping a cart, a horse, and a man, until at last he became the first fishmonger in the town, and had to supply his old master at the wholesale prices. This

shows what may be done by industry, perseverance, and honesty; for an idle boy would never have striven for a livelihood like little Bob the Fishmonger.

I will now tell you about a strange bird, called

THE GREBE.

or dabchick, for I wish to make you acquainted with many things that you could not comprehend were you only to read dry, hard books on Natural History, such as are filled with learned phrases, that only men who have dedicated a whole life to the study of can clearly understand. The nest of this curious bird has long been a subject of dispute among naturalists, many of whom, I strongly suspect, never saw it. But first, I must describe the wild spot where the grebe was in the habit of building, a spot which will interest you all the

more through knowing that it formed a subject of dispute between Hotspur and Glendower, in the first part of Shakspeare's "King Henry IV.," act iii., scene 1. You must know then that in Shakspeare's time the river Trent, which divides the counties of Nottingham and Lincoln, made a large circle of four or five miles, which Shakspeare calls "a huge half-moon," though it is not so, but bears a greater resemblance to a ring with a small piece out, and that small piece, which we will suppose to be the sixteenth part, was all the actual progress made either up or down, after having traversed the immense circle of the ring. Well, this large circular portion of the river, which was navigable in Shakspeare's time, has been dry for the last half-century, saving where here and there, in the deepest portions of the bed, pools of water still remain. Fancy yourself walking in the bed of a deep river—in a place where, for hundreds and hundreds of years, as far back, no doubt, as the times of the ancient Britons, who there had paddled their wicker boats, along which Dane and Saxon had in succession sailed —fancy what emotions it must have awakened in the mind of an imaginative boy, to have seen the great, high banks upheaving on either hand, and to know that he was walking in that great, dry channel, where, during the unnumbered years that it was a wide, deep, rolling river, hundreds had no doubt been drowned; to think that ships had sailed over your head; had, perhaps, sunk, and were buried many fathoms deep in the mud beneath your feet; that you walked over the skeletons of fishes, and the buried antiquities of the earliest inhabitants who first navigated this broad English river. A solitary ruined chapel was the only ancient structure which stood upon those waterless banks, and that was in ruins. Time had obliterated every record on those old monuments, and the gray, rank grass had grown so tall, that it had fallen down for want of strength to support such an unnatural height. While walking there you might fancy that you were wandering through

a silent world, every trace of whose inhabitants had been swept away, blotted out, and destroyed, like the bright-arrowy waters which once shot their rippled silver through the winding expanse of those high-piled banks; and now, where the huge sturgeon once swam, and the black-backed porpoise played, where the moon-lit scales of the salmon glittered, and the enormous pike darted upon its prey—there the bittern boomed, and the tufted plover complained, and the large marsh-frog croaked through the deepening twilight—rushes and reeds, and sword-leaved water-flags, sharp on the edge as a cimiter, overhung with willows and alders, shot up from under every knoll above the deep water-pools, and shadowed every little islet round which the mysterious current coiled, and rolled, above dark, unexplored depths, from whose waters the boldest of us shrunk back in terror, for into those deep holes we believed the vast mass of the old river-waters had settled, and that they went downward and downward for evermore.

And here it was that the wild grebe built its nest, among reeds, and flags, and aquatic plants, from which she selected the material for her home, and which were scarcely distinguishable from the wild, withered sedge that waved around. The nest was of itself a load almost as much as a boy could well carry, and generally at least a foot thick at the bottom; the strong reeds and rushes which grew around were also bent and woven into it, although the roots were still firm in the ground, so that it was at times impossible to remove the nest without cutting away the growing flags to which it was attached. At first we were strangely puzzled by one day discovering eggs in the nest, and the next day finding it to all appearance empty. For some time we were deceived, until one day, thrusting our hand into a nest, into which it was difficult to peep, we found the eggs beneath a thin covering of dry reeds—whether the bird had done this to conceal them during her absence, or to keep up that warmth which is necessary for hatching the

eggs, we must leave to the learned naturalist to decide. Strange stories are told of this bird sailing away in her nest, and navigating it like a ship, which I can not for a moment believe; that the nest might be washed away during a heavy rain is likely enough, although, secured as I have seen it by the rushes which grow around, I am more inclined to believe that it would remain submerged in the water. As to its thrusting its feet through, and so paddling along with its nest, the immense size of its foot will prove that it could never force a hole through a substance a foot thick. The eared grebe is a singular-looking bird: the bill is black, as also is the head and neck; while a few long, yellow feathers extend backward from the sides of the head; it lays from four to five white eggs, and commonly breeds in the bed of the old river which we have attempted to describe. When alarmed, it will dive under the water, and remain there a long time, with only its bill visible. The water-rat is said to be a great destroyer of its eggs; but those who say so know nothing about the matter, for, as I have told you before, the water-rat lives entirely upon vegetables; while diving, however, the bird sometimes falls a prey to the voracious pike.

Hitherto I have told you nothing about the wonderful habits of insects; and were I to communicate to you one quarter of the marvels I have read about, and what I have witnessed during my rambles in the country, I should more than fill my Book of the Seasons with this subject alone. I should not, however, consider that I had done my duty in this work unless I gave you some account of the Caterpillars; and I shall begin with those, who, almost as soon as they are hatched, roll up a leaf, and make their abode within its folds. You have, no doubt, often, when walking in the garden, observed the leaves of the lilac fold together; if you have noticed it at all, you have probably thought that this was caused by the heat, or that the leaf was withering, and about to fall off. Upon a closer observation, however, you will have discovered

that this was not the case, but that the leaf was beautifully rolled back, fold upon fold, as you would roll a sheet of paper; and that, to prevent the leaf from springing back to its natural level position, the little architect has prevented it from uncoiling by fixing a number of silken threads across the leaf. From this little insect springs a very pretty brown-colored moth. There is another species which takes up its abode in the leaves of the rose-tree, or currant-bush: this you will see in every garden; it is known by its dark head and six feet. As if it knew its own weakness, and the strength which summer gives to the sap, and foresaw to what a size the leaves would grow, it commences its labor in the spring, and begins by rolling up the whole bud, in which it is hidden; and then, as the summer advances, it has nothing to do but to devour its way from leaf to leaf, until it illustrates a homely proverb, by fairly "eating itself out of house and arbor." Others again, such as frequent willows, and almost every kind of osier, fold the leaves up into a beautiful bundle, which they bind together. Were you to cut the leaves across with a sharp instrument, you would be delighted to see the graceful form into which they are folded. Another class take up their abode in old walls, their food being the moss and lichen which grow thereon; these, inclosed in a box with moss, construct for themselves a beautiful nest; and there is an old wall, surrounding a manor-house at Beckenham, near London, in which numbers of these-caterpillars have taken up their abode.

There is another kind of caterpillar, which feeds upon the wood of trees, and makes itself a house by eating away the inside of it. This in time turns to the goat-moth, although it is three years in arriving to a perfect state. The only method of becoming acquainted with the manners of these interesting insects is to keep them confined in little boxes with glass doors, and feed them with whatever we first find them upon, if it can be procured. A celebrated naturalist

found a red caterpillar, with a few tufts of hairs on it, feeding on the flowers of the nettle: he placed it in a paper box, and in a few days discovered that it was beginning to prepare its cocoon, which it formed by gnawing pieces of paper from the lid of the box, although it neither lacked the leaves nor stalks of nettles amid which it was found. The watchful naturalist, thinking that it might soon eat its way out, and so escape, began to fasten pieces of rumpled paper to the lid of the box by means of a pin, and these the insect soon began to chop up into such pieces as it needed for the completion of its structure. Four weeks after a beautiful dark-colored moth, mottled with white, made its appearance. Surely, to watch such interesting operations as these would be more pleasing to any boy than to destroy the insects.

There is another curious race of insects, well known to fishermen, which build their habitations under the water, and which they form of stones, shells, sand, or wood, all strongly cemented together: others select portions of reed, or hollow straws, leaving a long piece to project over the head; so that, when resting at the bottom of the stream, it looks like a piece of sunken and broken reed; nor would you, unless you knew, suppose for a moment that it was the habitation of an insect. But the most skillful of all the caddis worms, which build under water, is the one which makes itself a hollow tube out of small stones, composed of such angles as would frighten any human architect; nor would a man attempt to form any thing like an arch out of such irregular materials, unless they were first cut and hewed into a proper form. Yet all this is managed by the little insect, selecting such stones as fit into each other, contriving also to leave the lower part smooth and even, so that it may drag its house along with greater ease when moving at the bottom of the stream; neither will water dissolve the cement used by these curious insects; nor must I omit stating that that

portion of the body which projects from the doorway of the cell is hard and firm, while the portion that remains within is soft. Thus you see, that even they are adapted for their state, and armed against trifling accidents; and throughout all nature we shall find this to be the case—no matter how insignificant an insect may appear, it is so constructed as to be able to provide itself with food and shelter; and we can not remove the decayed bark from a tree, the moss from a wall, or even a coiled-up leaf, without discovering, after a minute survey, that each of these is the home of some living object.

"The same wisdom," says Bonnet, in his "Contemplation of Nature," "which has constructed and arranged with so much art the various organs of animals, and has made them concur toward one determined end, has also provided that the different operations, which are the natural results of the economy of the animal, should concur toward the same end. The creature is directed toward his object by an invisible hand; he executes with precision, and by one effort, those works which we so much admire; he appears to act as if he reasoned, to return to his labor at the proper time, to change his scheme in case of need. But in all this he only obeys the secret influence which drives him on. He is but an instrument which can not judge of each action, but is wound up by that adorable Intelligence which has traced out for every insect its proper labors, as He has traced the orbit of each planet. When, therefore, I see an insect working at the construction of a nest, or a cocoon, I am impressed with respect, because it seems to me that I am at a spectacle where the Supreme Artist is hid behind the curtain."

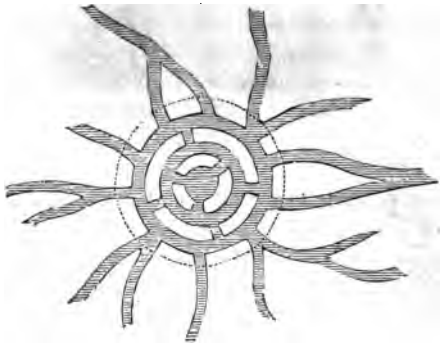
> "For the whole earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

This little hillock of earth, covered with wild thyme, among which the summer-bees are now murmuring, was thrown up by the

MOLE.

or moldwàrp, as it is called by the country people; and if we had a spade I would lay bare its little habitation, and show you such a wonderful encampment as you have rarely witnessed,—chambers, and galleries, and long, winding passages, which lead in all directions, and, when opened, look not unlike the old puzzle which is called the Plan of Troy. The earth, as you may tell by placing your foot upon it, is very strong and solid, for it has been well pressed and well beaten by the mole while making it. At the bottom of this hillock there is a gallery almost as round as a ring, and there is a smaller one also above it, of the same form; and to get from one gallery to the other it has made itself five passages, which go upward. Isn't that something like a house, think you, with five stair-cases, which lead to the upper story; but this is not half that I have got to tell you: it has also a chamber lower down than the lowest gallery which I have described, and you must know there is also another hole at the bottom of the chamber, which, after running down for a few inches, rises up again, and opens into a passage, or high-road, if we may so call it, of the encampment. But when in this passage it can turn back again and enter the circular gallery at the bottom,

which I have before described, and take its choice of any of the nine streets which branch out from this lower passage. What a place would this be to play at "Hide and Seek" in, if it were but big enough; and as it is so very curious, I must present you with a picture of it. And here you have an engraving of the nest, or



ENCAMPMENT OF THE MOLE

Is it not wonderful! You little thought, while looking upon this uninteresting hillock of earth, that it covered in such a marvelous building as this. You might wonder for what purpose it wanted such a number of roads and galleries, looking so many different ways; but when I tell you that this is its chase, or forest, or hunting-ground, and that it ranges here and there, up this passage and down that, searching for earth-worms and insects, you will see at once the use of these numerous avenues, and the chance it has of obtaining larger quantities of food through having such extensive grounds to range in. But there is a larger run, which naturalists call the high-road, and along this he passes many times in the course of the day, to visit his several hunting-grounds, which branch out every way; and, I can tell you, necessity causes the

moles to be very polite to each other, for only one at a time can pass along this common high-road, which seems to belong to the whole community of moles; so that, if two chance to meet, one is compelled to retire into one of the side-passages until the other passes; and sometimes this causes a fight, and then of course the weakest goes to the wall. But although they thus quarrel about the possession of the road, each seems to pay great respect to his neighbor's inclosure, one never taking possession of the hunting-ground another has made. It is in this common highway where the mole-catchers place the traps, as they know he has to pass it many times in the course of the day, to see what game there is in his preserve. You must not always expect to find its nest under a mole-hill, for it is oftener placed at the end of three or four passages, at some distance from the encampment; when, if you are fortunate enough to light upon the right spot, you may sometimes dig out four or five young ones in summer. It is a thirsty animal, requiring much drink, and the high-road, which I have so often mentioned, as being used by the whole community of moles, is sure to lead to a common run, which opens out near some ditch or pond; but when water is far distant, they will sink a well of their own, and dig downward and downward until they come to water. In pursuing a worm, it will sometimes follow it to the surface of the earth, devour it, and return back again into its burrow. It always looks fat, and has a sharp, tapering nose, well adapted for turning up the earth: its eyes are very small, and I should think of but very little use in so dark a habitation. The fur is soft as silk, and bright as velvet; its color is a deep black, although, by shining the hair in the direction in which it lies, it has a grayish appearance: its feet are furnished with sharp nails, with which it scoops and digs away the earth, throwing the loosened dirt behind as it progresses with its work, and which it afterward carries up and forms into those hillocks which

we so commonly see. In winter, when the earth is frozen hard, and its hunting-ground is cold and useless, and produces no food, it will dig a deep hole straight down, in order to reach the worms that have taken shelter there from the cold. It is also a good swimmer, and cares no more about crossing a brook than a water-rat. You little dreamed that such a curious animal, and such a wonderful structure were to be found under this little hillock, which to look upon, saving for the few wild flowers which cover it, appears an object of no interest. And so shall we often find it in our walks through the world: we kick aside a hollow stone, without thinking of the years that it must have taken, and the countless millions of fallen drops of water, to have worn away that cavity, while others that are worn into all kinds of fantastic shapes, must have been tossing about in the ocean and on the earth for unnumbered ages.

Oh what a treat it is now to throw off one's coat and jacket, and lie down in the shade under some great tree, that stretches its broad branches far across the greensward! while it is so hot that I wonder how the little birds can hop up and down the big branches at all, or open their beaks to raise even a chirrup, covered as they are all over with warm feathers.

What a luxury an icicle would
be now if we could but get one;
every thing looks hot here,
saving those large white

WATER-LILIES.

which seem sleeping among their broad, dark leaves, on the clear waters of the moorland mere. Saw ye ever a more majestic flower? What a pure pearly white, showing the more clearly through being contrasted with the deep golden center of the cup, and the rich green of the rounded leaves on which they seem to sleep. What grace there is in their motion, as they rise and fall with every ripple that ridges the broad surface of the mere! how cool and clear they are! and so they remain all night, closing, and half-sinking down into the water, and sometimes scarcely leaving a leaf visible above the surface until sunrise the next morning, when they again open and lean upon their green, silky beds, as they do now—the loveliest ladies of the lake: for "mere" is but the old Saxon name for a large pool or lake.

Pleasant is it to see a wild honey-suckle, hanging in long trails of crimson and white, along the wood-sides by which we pass; drooping above the red and white foxgloves with their beautifully speckled bells, which we used to gather and stick upon the tips of our fingers, calling them gloves: to see the glaring yellow charlock spreading everywhere over acres and acres of ground, with scarcely a patch of green between; recalling those fanciful gardens of the fairies which were covered every way with flowers of gold: to inhale the perfume of the meadow-sweet, which approaches nearer the smell of the fragrant heliotrope than the costliest garden flower that ever was cultivated: to see the banks glowing with the rich tints of the mallow—a half-roselike flush: and, above all, to wander by the side of reedy ponds, where the tall, yellow flowers of the water-flags give such a sunny and summer look unto the sedgy scenery. Mingling with, and almost overpowering every other fragrance, comes the drowsy odor from the bean-fields—the sweetest, saving that from the new-mown hay, of all summer smells. These were the pleasures that made our rural rambles so delightful; things which we dwell

upon even now with a sweet remembrance—giving such a freshness to memory and such a lifelike reality to all we can recall of the pleasant visions of our boyish days.

But I have got a laughable story to tell you about two old men, which you will find a good moral in; for it is a great shame, and very wicked to pick sport out of the infirmities of mankind, even if we do no injury to any one. I well remember a waggish youth who would have fun, whatever it might cost him, and never seemed so happy as when he was about some work of mischief; and when he could amuse himself no other way, he would begin playing tricks with his deaf uncle. There was an old neighbor, who lived opposite, quite as dull of hearing as his uncle was, for neither the one nor the other could hear himself speak; and it was the delight of this scapegrace of a nephew to set these two deaf old men together by the ears; and as neither of them could hear what the other said, you may readily imagine what a droll scene an explanation must have been between them. Like the king in "Hamlet," this graceless young scamp first poured his poison into the ear of one, then into the ear of the other; and he would begin by bawling out "Uncle!" into the drum of the ear of his deaf relative, who would lower his trumpet, and drink in every word of slander which this young mischief-maker uttered. "Uncle, old Billy Barton says you get drunk every night—that you run up a score everywhere, when any one will trust you—and that you owe money to every publican in Lincoln—and have never paid him the last half-guinea he lent you, uncle—and he stops every body he meets to tell them of it!"

"He's an old rascal—and doesn't speak the truth—and I'll have an action against him—that I will—if it costs me every shilling I'm worth. I've never been intoxicated since the last election; and as to money, I never borrowed a farthing of him in my life, or of any body living—and I'll go

tell him so to his face, that I will—the bad, lying old rogue!" and he would take up his stout oaken walking-staff, and sally out to put his threat into execution, muttering to himself "fifty old rogues and a hundred old rascals;" and stamping his walking-staff savagely upon the ground every stride he took, until he worried himself into a regular towering passion, which was quite "nuts" to the rogue of a nephew; for the young scamp had been beforehand to old Billy Barton, cramming him with a parcel of lies, and telling him what his uncle had said about him.

"Mr. Barton!" he would halloo into his ear, while old Billy was taking his walk at the other end of the town, "my uncle says you undid his sty-door last night, and let his pigs out—somebody saw you—and they've eaten up all the peas and young cabbage, and rooted up the flower-beds, and done five pounds' worth of damage—and he's gone to get a warrant out against you—and I thought I would tell you, that you might make it up with him without going to law."

You may easily fancy how old Billy raved and stormed after such a charge as this, for, deaf as he was, he could make himself heard; and how he set off at once to repel the accusation and defend himself—not having time, in the heat of his passion, to inquire who this "somebody" was, that had seen him, and brought the charge against him.

Meantime the young scamp used to run and assemble his companions in the street, to witness, as he would say, "such a row between his uncle and old Barton;" and the nephew so managed matters, and measured his distance, that the two old men were almost sure to meet in the greatest thoroughfare in Lincoln. At it they would go as fast as ever their tongues could rattle, blowing one another up beautifully—foaming and raving, and stamping their sticks upon the ground, and clenching their fists in each other's faces—and neither of them hearing a word which the other said—but, from the earnest

manner and vehemence of action, each believing the other was maintaining the accusation which the mischief-making young dog had first founded. "You say I get drunk every night," the deaf old uncle would exclaim, stamping his stick as he spoke. "You say I turned your pigs out of the sty last night!" old Barton would exclaim, shaking his cane at him. "Show me the man I ever owed a shilling to in my life!" roared out the one. "I never did any body an injury since I was born!" bellowed the other. "I'll have an action against you for damaging my character," shouted the uncle loud enough to be heard half-way down the street, so loud, indeed, that the word damage struck the dull drum of deaf Billy's ear, and he echoed, between his teeth, "Damages, you old rogue, you let 'em out yourself—you know you did—on purpose to injure my character, because I voted against you at the last election—you rabid old Tory, you!" "I've got as many half-guineas as you," hallooed out the old uncle; "and have no need to borrow of any body, thank God! you vile, bad, wicked, slandering, thief-looking, unhung old rascal! I shall see you some morning whipped at a cart's tail! Oh! I wish the good old pillories still stood; I would buy a hamper of rotten eggs to pelt you with, that I would!" and he would bring his huge stick within a foot of poor, harmless, deaf Billy's face; then they would begin to collar one another, and no doubt there would soon have been "battle royal" between them, had not some peace-loving neighbor have interfered, and, although he failed in reconciling them, patched up for the time a temporary cessation of hostilities.

So matters progressed, till the frequency of their quarrels caused some mutual friend to interfere, and inquire into the cause; when, to the astonishment and amusement of them both, "my nephew" was found out; and heartily did they laugh as the explanation was in turns hammered into their ears; and a dozen times did the merry old men rise and shake hands;

then sit down again to laugh; for the friend who reconciled them had concocted a scene of excellent mischief and retaliation, which they had agreed to put into operation; and the thought of it so tickled their old fancies with delight that they roared again louder than they even did when abusing each other. Nay, we verily believe, that from the bottom of their hearts they were glad that they'd had so many quarrels without any cause, merely for the sake of the "making it up," as they called it, in the presence of their common enemy. Nor was it long before an opportunity presented itself; for the nephew had been at his old work, and they pretended, as usual, to believe all that he said; and so well did they mimic a passion and conceal their designs, that he, suspecting nothing, bade us, as he'd often done, to "make haste, and come along, to see such a row between his uncle and old Barton."

Wicked dogs that we were! No hounds ever set off with more willingness to hunt a fox than we did to see a rupture between these two deaf old men; and, with the nephew at our head, away we went, helter-skelter, his laugh the loudest of all, and ringing out above all others, as if the entertainment had been got up for his sole amusement. Up he ran, rubbing his hands, and kicking his heels with delight, as he shouted, "Now they're going to begin: take your places! Act 1st, Billy Barton stole uncle's chickens; Act 2d, enter uncle to rob Billy Barton's apple-tree—which, you know, we did for him. Up go the sticks; now for it! a real fight this time! Lay on, uncle! Strike hard, Billy!" And, without hearing, they both took him at his word; for they seized him in an instant, each laying hold of one side of his collar; and need I tell you that we, who had so often laughed at his wickedness, were delighted to see him caught in his own trap? and, instead of pitying him, we only echoed his own words, and exclaimed, "Lay on, uncle! strike hard, Billy!" —and, although they broke no bones, I can assure you they

gave him such a thrashing as caused him to remember the day when he first set two deaf old men together by the ears. And long as it is since, I can scarcely refrain from laughing, while recalling the astonished look of the nephew when they seized upon him;—how he turned up the whites of his eyes, first at one, then at the other, while his visage lengthened; and said (as plain as a countenance can speak), "caught at last!" But what made it less effective was, that both the old men laughed heartily the whole of the time they were beating him. First the uncle began, with "I get drunk every night, do I!" Tap. Then came old Barton, with "I turned your uncle's pigs out, did I!" Bang. Then again the uncle chimed in, with "I robbed Billy Barton's apple-tree, did I!" Thump. Then again Barton took up the chorus, with "I stole your uncle's chickens, did I!" Whack. And all this was diversified with so many "Oh dear mes!" and "Oh, I'll never do so no more!" and "Oh, I beg your pardon!" with an accompaniment of cuts and capers on the part of the culprit; now a shoulder up, then a leg, that, as his uncle said when he had done, "he had made him, for once in his life, dance without a fiddle; and it would be a great pity, after telling so many tales, that they should be left without a moral." And what was worse, every body in Lincoln said that it served the nephew right; and the only injustice in the affair was, that we, who had so often shared in and countenanced his sins, ought to have partaken of a portion of his stripes. But, on this point, I beg to assure you that we disagreed with our respected friends, and could not see at all that we ought to be punished for laughing at the mischief manufactured by another. They, however, thought different; and I must leave it to you to decide which were in the right!

You see that bird which keeps mounting upward like the skylark, but whose song is no more to be compared to the notes of that beautiful warbler than the clamor of the rook is to the gushing melody of the blackbird—that is the

SNIPE.

a bird which occasionally remains with us all the year, and is found in almost every part of England. In wet weather it resorts to the hills and woods, though its favorite haunt seems to be the meadows and marshes in the neighborhood of rivers. It never wanders far for the materials with which its builds its nest. Should it be on a marsh, it takes the coarse grass which grows around it; if on a heath or moor, it makes use of the heather; generally, however, selecting a dry spot on which to build, but never far distant from some boggy or swampy place. The eggs, which are of an olive-color, blotched and spotted with dusky brown, are always found in the nest with their pointed ends placed inward. The snipe is curiously marked. The black crown of the head is divided by a line down the middle; the back is black, and barred, and striped with buff-colored lines; the breast and belly white; and the black feathers of the tail spotted with deep orange toward the end. Some have compared the noise that it makes, when descending on the wing, to the bleating of a goat; and many believe that this peculiar sound is produced by its wings.

When mounting in the air it utters a shrill, sharp, piping sound. You would be delighted to see how quick, and to what a depth it sends its pointed bill into the earth after worms, for its long beak is nearly a full third of the length of the neck and body.

And now I must say a few words about frogs and toads, wishing you at the same time to remember that I have, in two or three instances, attempted to enlist your kind feelings in favor of such poor, inoffensive animals, as it has too long been the fashion to persecute, before I draw your attention to this ill used and harmless race; sincerely believing that when you have read all I have got to say, you will never again willfully destroy either a frog or a toad. "But a toad," you exclaim, "is a poisonous reptile!" Believe me when I tell you this is not the truth; on the contrary, it is perfectly harmless, may be rendered tame, and even be taught to eat out of your hand. True, it is far from prepossessing in its appearance; but this is no excuse for your destroying it; were we, on the contrary, to encourage it in our gardens, and protect it, we should soon perceive its usefulness in the diminution of insects and worms which make such havoc among vegetation. You would be delighted to watch it before seizing upon its prey. For a moment or two it remains perfectly motionless and fixed as a stone, its eyes bent upon the insect, and its head thrown forward; when, the instant the object moves, it is struck by the tongue of the toad, and drawn into its mouth; and so rapid is the action, that it is scarcely the work of a moment, and unless your eye happens to alight upon it in the very tick of time, you would discover that the insect had gone, without seeing when or where. It is also very amusing to see it seize upon a large, long worm, especially if it happens to lay hold of it in the middle; the poor worm twists and turns all kinds of ways on the outside of the jaws of the toad, and by its twining and struggling, endeavors to escape;

but all in vain, for the toad makes use of its forefeet, first shoving one end of it into its mouth, and then the other, until the whole is devoured. Gilbert White, in his "History of Selborne," tells us of some ladies who took a fancy to a toad, which used to come out every evening from a hole under the garden steps, and, after supper, was always taken up and placed upon the table, where it was fed: so that you see there were a few sensible people even more than half-a-century ago, who were not afraid of being poisoned by it. And Mr. Bell, in his "History of British Reptiles," makes mention of a very large one which he kept, that would sit on one of his hands while it ate from the other. I must also tell you, that the toad, like the snake, casts its skin, and now and then comes out with a new coat on its back, which he is, no doubt, as proud of as a charity boy is of his new suit at Easter. As to its being found alive in the center of a solid rock, or in the heart of a large tree, where it has been supposed to have lived for hundreds of years, without either a mouthful of food or a breath of air, why I think it about as likely to be true as the tale of the horse, which its owner boasted he would teach to live upon nothing, aud which, to nobody's astonishment but his own, died as soon as he began to reduce it to a straw a-day. So has it turned out in every experiment which has been made to imprison toads, either in stone, plaster, or wood; and although they have lived much longer than might have been expected, they have generally been found dead at the end of a few months. One or two, I believe, have lived over a year in this state of imprisonment; but no animal requires less respiration, or, when not in motion, can live upon less food.

Those little dark-looking objects, which all of you must have seen swimming about by hundreds in ponds and ditches, with their large, round heads and long tails, and something like fins projecting out from each side of the neck, and which you

call tadpoles, are young frogs; and were it not that thousands upon thousands of them are devoured by newts and small fishes, they would soon multiply to such an extent that, when fully grown, they would overrun the land. Few animals have more persecutors than the poor frogs; it can never grow too big for the jaws of the voracious pike; almost every kind of water-fowl feeds upon it; it is the favorite food of the snake; and as for stoats and weasels and polecats, they devour them by hundreds; and there is hardly a bird of prey that does not feed upon them. Surely, then, this poor reptile has plenty of enemies, without being pelted to death or destroyed by cruel boys. Like the toad, it is a great destroyer of insects, and you will never find many slugs in a garden which is frequented by frogs; it takes its food in the same manner, by throwing forward its tongue, which, in a state of repose, doubles back as you would fold a leaf; its tongue also possesses a kind of sticky matter, to which the prey adheres. You have, no doubt, heard scores of them croaking when you have been walking out on a beautiful calm evening by the side of some long, straggling dike; and to me it has ever seemed far from an unpleasant noise: and during my rambles by the side of such places, I have always made a point of looking where I planted my foot, that I might avoid trampling any one of them to death. Like many other reptiles it sleeps during the winter, burying itself in the mud at the bottom of the water, where they are often found in draining or digging out a water-course, huddled together by scores; and I have seen a large spadeful of them lifted out at once. When spring comes they are all alive and kicking again; for it is then that they bring forth their eggs, from which come those thousands of tadpoles that we see at this season of the year. You will sometimes observe a quantity of black spots in a large mass of clear jelly floating on the surface of the water. These black spots are the eggs of the frog. But the most wonderful thing in the structure

of these harmless reptiles is, that they have the power of breathing through the skin. This has been proved by tying up the head tightly with a portion of bladder, in fact, literally hanging them, then placing them in a vessel under water. If you ever want to see how far a frog can leap without doing it any injury, strike the ground smartly a few inches behind where it is squatted, with a stick, and away it will jump an astonishing distance. I should tell you that you will never find the tail which you see on young frogs on any of the old ones. Their motions in the water are beautiful, and I know no better tutor to teach you the art of swimming than a frog. Only watch narrowly its attitude, stretch yourself out as it does with the head elevated, and strike out in the same way with the hands and feet, and take my word for it, you will soon be able to swim.

This is a true English picture, a smooth-shaven green, the sunshine streaming upon it, and glancing on the canvas tents and white dresses of the

CRICKET PLAYERS

Just look how the batsman stands. His foot firm—his eye fixed—the ball is delivered, it bounds beautifully, just his favorite height. What a swing he takes with his arms; that blow would fell a bullock. The ball looks no bigger than a bee in the air, with such force is it struck—so high it is sent, far away beyond the long-fieldsman. "Run—run—run!" cries every voice; not a cross—not a slip; notch after notch is added, and the whole air rings again with the voices of the by-standers. But hush! a fresh bowler has taken up the ball; their favorite batsman looks a little thoughtful, for he well knows that peculiar turn of the wrist which so much baffles the ablest striker. Cautious and watchful are they both. "Play!" It comes quick as a shot, and is driven back with tenfold rapidity, and another shout rises high for the favorite batsman, though the ball was caught by one of the fieldsmen who faced it, with so sure an aim and so true a spring, that you would scarcely be astonished to see him stop and catch a ball fired from a cannon. A slower ball is next delivered by the bowler, who deceived all eyes but the batsman's, from whom there is no disguising his play, so well is he able to measure the speed of the ball from the very tick of time that it is first delivered. And yet these are but everyday players, and, beyond the limits of their own village not the name of one of them is known as a cricket-player.

Ah! I have seen this game played many a time as it ought to be, on Nottingham Forest; for who has not heard of the Nottingham cricket-players, whose exploits have rung through all England? Such batters and bowlers as I never expect to look upon again. Well did the fieldsmen know their distance when a first-rate batsman went in; and ample range they gave him, for they knew that the ball, when struck by such a powerful arm, would fly off like a cannon-shot. What stumping out and bowling out have I seen on that forest! Oh! it is a

noble game; and as for exercise, none better can be found. But I need not here enter fully into the particulars of the game, for they are recorded in the "Boy's Own Book;" and any description of mine would be but a repetition of what is already well told. Few, I imagine, can see this game played without feeling pleasure while looking on. The eager interest of the contending parties, the watchful eye and ever ready hand, the foot planted to an inch, the distance run in such quick, measured strides, give life and animation to the scene. The white dresses of the cricketers, too, form a pleasing contrast to the green landscape; and the deep hum of so many voices bespeak the great interest which they take in the game. What grace there is in their motions; what symmetry displayed in their limbs, as they run, bowl, or strike, unincumbered by any superfluous drapery. It is well worthy of its appellation, and is deservedly called the Noble Game of Cricket.

Just observe those sawyers at work in the saw-pit—see how soon they cut down a large deal—how true they keep to the chalked marks, the man in the pit having a line drawn to guide him, as well as the man above—watch the clean sawdust as it falls, smooth as snow, though not so white—see the great piles of timber that stand piled round everywhere; planks for floors, and for roofs, joists, and center-beams, and huge trees full of knots, and the beautiful bark on them, covered here and there with such rich-colored and velvet-looking moss. Oh, it sometimes smells like being in the midst of pleasant greenwood.

Old Dicky, one of the sawyers, is too aged to work now: he was a funny fellow, so kind to us boys; and once, when they were repairing a large sewer, which went under the theater, Dicky and his mate were sent for to take the measure, and prop up the floor above with strong beams of wood brought from their saw-yard, for the place was considered dangerous. "Now," said Dicky, at night, when they had

done sawing and fitting in the beams, and making all secure. "Now, my lads, if you've a mind to go into the theater for nothing to-night, you can; for there's a hole open which leads into the pit, and I left a short ladder there; it will bring you out just under where the fiddler sits, so you can pop up one at a time, sit down where you like, and the money-takers will be none the wiser." Well, we thought this a capital chance to see the performance for nothing; and the theater was no sooner open than down the sewer nearly half-a-score of us went like so many rats. We had a good way to go in the dark before we reached the ladder which Dicky had told us of, but we did reach it, and one after another got into the pit; but such a parcel of dirty, black, slimy little fellows as we were you never saw in your life, for we had gone knee-deep through the black filth, which had, perhaps, never been disturbed for nearly a century. We sat down, however, black and covered with slime as we were. But the odor we had brought with us was unbearable. "What an unpleasant smell!" exclaimed one. "Sit farther off," cried another. And what was worse than all, a score or more boys beside ourselves had learned the secret, and kept bobbing up, and into the pit, about every minute or so, some of them having tumbled down in the sewer. A pit full of sweeps would have been more welcome companions. At last we were found out; the first act was over, down fell the curtain, and into the pit came the manager, and out we were bundled quicker than ever we came in. But, what was worse than all, we rubbed against several boys who really *had* paid. But all in vain were protests and exclamations: the marks of the sewer were found upon them, and out they went along with the guilty. Never did a merry farce draw down more roars of hearty laughter than was heard in the old theater that night; nay, if even the innocent boys who had unconsciously rubbed against us only smelled of the kennel, they were bundled out with us; and, what was worse than all, when

we got outside, there was old Dicky, the sawyer, laughing at us; and to this day we believe it was he who told the manager, and who sent down all the dirty boys he could muster after us, and all Dicky said was, "You should have filled your pockets with saw-dust, my lads, and given yourselves a good scrubbing on the ladder, then they would never have noticed you." And often afterward he twitted us, and asked us how we liked the play of "A Night in the Sewer, or the Black and White Rat-catchers who were caught in their own trap." Still we liked old Dicky, although he played us off such a dirty trick, and I believe it cured us from ever trying to steal into the theater again without paying. Then we had another trick. It was too bad, but it made us laugh heartily; and what will not boys do for fun? We used to get a large-headed nail, which was as big as a sixpence, and file the top until it was as smooth and bright as silver, then thrust it tight down between the nick of two slabs on the pavement. First one would come by, then another, all believing it was a real sixpence; and when they stooped down with an intent to pick it up, lo! it was immovable: and then we were watching round the corner, and ready to laugh at every one we took in. One or two whom we had before deceived would take out their pocket-knives and carry off the nail, saying, "Good lads, this will come in useful some day or another." Then we slunk off, looking very sheepish, for the big-headed nail had cost some one of us a halfpenny. So, you see, the laugh in the end was always against us, as it ought to be with all who try to deceive people.

What sport we used to have at this time in running, leaping, swinging, and trying to outrival each other in all these and many other similar feats. Every boy who knows any thing about leaping or jumping, knows what a cat-gallows is. You get two sticks with a few knots, or short, projecting branches on them, and then you stick them into the ground, about a yard asunder. Then you place a slender stick

across them, almost like the letter H, only you are able to raise or lower the cross-bar according to the knots or ends of the branches, just as you think you can manage to clear it without knocking down the slender stem which is laid across. If you have jumped over it at a certain height, perhaps the next boy, who has also gone over it, will raise it higher; if he clears it, you must follow him; if you also leap clean over, you must then raise it to the next stem, and you will be astonished to see how well you can jump after a few days of such practice: for there is no danger in it; you can not hurt yourself; the slightest touch, and down goes the slender bar which is laid lengthwise across. After such trials as these, you then begin to venture at a stoup-and-rail fence; you must look to your shins while leaping over, for this is very different to the other: here all is hard, rugged, and substantial, and the safest way is to measure the height first, by standing beside the barrier; for you ought to know to an inch, by this time, how high you are able to jump. Either go over with full confidence at once, or give it up. If you once begin to waver and doubt, ten to one you graze your shins, and get laughed at by your more courageous companions. If you think you can not clear it, confess, and give in at once; you will save your bones by it, and all the other boys can say will be, that they are better jumpers than you are. Leap-frog every boy knows how to play at, and he should be careful to hold his head well in while "making a back;" but this is better exercise for cold weather than the hot months of summer. "Stag out" was a noble game for those who could run well. There was the Forester to see fair play; all the boys beside, saving the one who was the stag, were hounds, and their station was called the kennel. The boy who played the stag had a certain distance given him in advance, before the Forester cried "Stag out," which was the signal for the hounds to start. Whoever caught him first was the next stag. Still

there was a spot called "the covert," and if the stag could regain that without being caught, he was lord of the forest again. Our forest, be it remembered, had its boundaries, and beyond these neither hart nor hounds must run.

You see that long-legged, sharp-beaked bird, with a splendid plume of long, black, glossy feathers on his head, which look like the sable crest of a helmet; that is the

HERON.

who delights to wade up to his body in the water, and stick his sharp bill into the first fish that happens to swim near him. He is none of your sleepy-headed birds, who go to roost at sunset with his head under his wing; but will turn out on a fine moonlight night, like a thorough angler, as he is, and pick up whatever he can catch, from a bleak up to a barbel; for, thin as he is, he has a most voracious appetite. The heron, like the rook, builds its nest on the trees; and

at one period there were a great number of heronries in England, and a few are still said to exist in Windsor Great Park; on the skirts of Bagshot Heath; near Beverley, in Yorkshire; and several other places. When hawking was so popular an amusement among the nobility of this country, the penalty for killing a heron was twenty shillings, or three months' imprisonment, unless the bird was captured by flying a hawk at it, or destroyed by the long-bow. In former times this bird was called a heronshaw; and there is an old adage still existing, often applied to a stupid person who can not comprehend any thing clearly, which says, that "he would not know a hawk from a handsaw;" the latter word being a corruption of heronshaw. The heron builds a slovenly-looking nest, formed of sticks placed crosswise, and lined with grass or rushes, with a thin covering of feathers or wool. Sometimes the rooks and herons have been known to wage war for the possession of the trees to build in; and the battle has terminated with loss of lives, and many wounded on both sides, though victory at last alighted upon the plumed heads of the herons, who compelled the rooks to abandon the trees, fly farther off, and found a new colony. It is also on record, that when the heron has been closely pursued by the hawk, and found he could not escape, he has made a sudden descent, turning himself upon his back as he sunk downward, so that when his pursuer alighted upon him, the sharp bill of the heron pierced through the body of the hawk. The heron may be often found standing, with one leg drawn up, by the sides of rivers and fish-ponds, where he watches for hours together, silently and patiently, for his prey.

Looking at that heron has recalled an old school-fellow—I think I see him now, bringing the heron home under his arm, and turning it loose on his mother's clean house-floor, where it went striding about, and everywhere left the marks of its dirty feet, until the poor old lady got into such a rage

that she drove it out of the door, and over the houses it flew, and was never seen again.

While young, as you are now, fresh faces will have fresh charms; but when you grow older, you will often, like me, think of the companions of your youthful days, and recall the many happy hours you have passed with those who, since then, perhaps, are dead. Such companions I once knew, and one of them, named Billy Maiden, whose memory has been recalled by the heron, I shall long remember; oh, he was a fellow full of fun, made rhymes, riddles, and all sorts of "nonsensitives," which you could not help laughing at if you tried ever so. I shall never forget one puzzling question which he used to put to us about a fox, three geese, and a basket of oats, and how a ferryman had to take them over the river, one at a time. Now, you know, if he took the fox over first (Billy would say), the geese would be sure to eat up the oats; if he took the geese over first, why then he must either fetch the fox or the oats next; if the fox, why it would kill the geese; if the oats, he was just where he started, for the geese would eat them up while he went back again for the fox. Well, the old ferryman did not know what to do, until at last a bright thought came across his mind all at once; and away he went, across the river, with the three geese, leaving the fox with the oats; the next journey he carried the fox over, and brought back the three geese, which he left on the opposite side, and went across with the oats; these he left once more with the fox, and then fetched the geese again. So you see he was compelled to make an extra trip, or else either lose the geese or the oats; and he used always to conclude his story by saying, "Better do a thing well, if it takes you a little longer, than badly, and have to do it all over again, and perhaps be a loser into the bargain." For Billy mostly ended with a moral. He used to boast that he could talk dog-latin, and puzzled us very much at first by his method of linking three or four

words together; such as, "infirtaris, intimberaleis, instrawcornis, inoaknoneis," which, by his rapid manner of pronunciation, had certainly a most awful Latin sound, but which, when pronounced slowly, though certainly not the most intelligible English, simply signified that "in fir tar is, in timber ale is, in straw corn is, in oak none is;" such was Billy's translation of his own dog-latin. Then he pretended to make poetry, too; but oh, such poetry; bless you, it was none of his own, after all, although he pretended it was such; as,—

> "Coffee and Tea
> S—O—L—D."

the D of course rhyming to Tea, and the names of the four letters forming the last line. Then his rhymes!—

> "Sing, oh sing, ye heavenly Muses,
> While I mends my boots and shoeses."

On the death of a kitten only two days old was better,—

> "My days on earth they were so small,
> I wonder why I came at all."

He made a couplet on our old schoolmaster, when a boy, for which he got soundly thrashed; and he used often jokingly to say, that he was more successful than a many young authors, for he got *paid* for his first article. Our schoolmaster's name was Flint, and he had a cast in his eye. Billy could not resist making a couplet, and thus it ran:—

> "Old Daddy Flint, with his squint, sees double;
> And if one boy laughs, two are sure to get into trouble."

Then he used to have such droll questions, and ask us, "how the first hammer was made;" and, wagging his forefinger quickly, he would say, "Can you do this, and hold your finger still?" These things seem very silly now, but they made us laugh heartily when we were boys. When he wanted to get us out to play on a moonlight night, he used to sing an

old stanza in the street, which I doubt not our forefathers chanted before us:—

> "Lads and lassies, come out to play,
> The moon it shines as bright as day;
> Come with a whoop, come with a call,
> Come with a good-will, or don't come at all."

Poor fellow, his was a melancholy end!—his giddiness and light-heartedness were the cause of his death. He was sitting, one summer evening, with his legs outside the head of the boat, repeating his quaint rhymes and odd sayings, and making us all laugh instead of attending to what we ought to have done, when the tide, or heygre (which I have before described), came upon us unawares, washed him away, half-filled the boat with water, and we never again saw him alive. Peace to his memory! he was beloved by us all.

School-days are said to be the seasons when friendships are formed; but it is not so: the boy we loved is too often another being when he grows up to manhood. Never, however, shun your old companion because he is poor, and not so fortunate as yourself; for no one can foresee the changes which may take place in this life. Never refuse his hand in after-days, though it may be hardened by labor and tanned by toil, unless he has sullied his fair name by dishonest and shameful deeds; for there is no manliness in petty pride; you may be richer than he is, but not a bit the better man for that: if you are wealthier, he will feel himself all the more honored by your recognizing him, and the pleasure will be mutual, for poverty oftener warms the heart than chills it—old friendships are its only solace; and whatever other books may tell you, believe me, things are not as they were; a man must have something beside riches now a days, to make himself beloved. The time is at hand when people will not run a mile to see a duke, or, if they do, they will go home, like old Betty Cawthre, and say, "Why, it was only a man after

all!" Stars and garters are not looked upon as they were in former days, for they are but the workmanship of man; a good name is better than a thousand such foolish and childish baubles as these; and Howard, the philanthropist, did more good for his fellow-men than all the Wellingtons that ever fought. I hate to see a parcel of English boys gather around another, and pay him homage because some day or another he will be richer than they are ever likely to be. Protect a weak boy, a poor boy, one who has nobody to stick up for him—this is true nobleness; but the other is mean, selfish, and not honorable. I should like to put true English hearts into you: manly feelings, noble thoughts, a contempt for every thing sordid, base, mean, vicious, and selfish; and make you feel that you will some day be called upon to play your part on the stage of the great country that gave you birth.

But see, there runs a

WILD RABBIT.

under the fern and between the gorse, and it is by this time concealed in its sandy burrow beside the wood. Nay, it is

no use chasing it; I saw the white tail as it ran into its hole. You may always tell a rabbit from a hare, by the shortness of its head and the gray color of the back. I love to sit on a green bank on a sunshiny day, and watch the young rabbits playing together on an open, sandy warren, they do so run and jump; but if they once catch sight of you, off they go, and are out of sight in less than a minute. You would scarcely credit the number of rabbits that are produced in a season; and were it not that they fall a prey to so many birds and animals, and are also destroyed for food by man, they would soon devour every thing that is green and eatable for miles around. You all of you know what tame rabbits are; and there are but very few boys who have not kept rabbits at one time or another; and I dare say you have often noticed how fond they are of scratching up the earth, if ever they can find a soft place—for although they were born in a hutch, and never in their lives saw either a heath or a warren, nor were ever taught to burrow in the earth, yet their natural instinct teaches them to try: and, no doubt, were they turned loose on a warren, they would soon become diggers and delvers, like their wild companions.

Hitherto I have only given a passing glance at a few of our favorite summer flowers; and, to make you better acquainted with them, I must take a closer survey, which I have no doubt will be both instructive and amusing to you all. First I will begin with the beautiful blue forget-me-not, which is to be found by the side of streams, and, like the water-lily, springing out of the water. When once you have seen it you will always know it again; it is a species of scorpion-grass, in shape resembling the primrose, although ten times smaller, and the clear yellow spot in the center forms a beautiful contrast to the rich blue by which it is surrounded. Its very name is pleasing, and it is often inclosed in letters, and sent from one friend to another; for what can be

a more poetical and delicate representative of affection than a pretty wild flower called the forget-me-not. I have before mentioned the convolvulus, or bind-weed; so called from its twining around every thing it can touch; even the very grass in the fields is wreathed with the little pink convolvulus, the smell of which is delightful; and I know but few things that look prettier than that handsome flower winding around two or three ears of corn; and there are but few flowers that can be twined into such beautiful forms; and sometimes you may come unaware upon a group of children who are busy making themselves belts, and scarfs, and coronals, and wreathing into a hundred fantastic forms every convolvulus they can seize upon while

GATHERING WILD FLOWERS

and attiring themselves with the long strings of the red and white convolvulus with which the hedges are netted and curtained over. I must also tell you that all these climbing plants do not twine the same way; many wind round from left to right, others again from right to left; thus the bryony

and the bind-weed both turn different ways: one toward the sun and the other from it; nor will they coil any other way, twine them and tie them as you may, but, if forced against their nature, speedily droop away and die. Sometimes the large, white convolvulus will cover the whole face of the hedge where it grows, and lead you to think that it was from the hedge itself such handsome flowers sprung; the leaves, which are heart-shaped, are almost as beautiful as the flowers. You have all seen the handsome blue convolvulus, starred with white, that grows so commonly in our gardens; and if you have paid close attention to it, you must have observed that it closes its bell, and "goes to bed," that is, shuts itself up, about four o'clock; and there are a number of flowers which close at certain hours, and are as regular as the clock; and you might tell the time of day to a few moments by noting down the particular periods at which they fold themselves up. The scarlet pimpernel, which grows so common in the cornfields, always closes before rain, and is called in the country the shepherd's warning, and the little weather-glass; it is of a beautiful bright-scarlet color, and as pretty a wild flower as ever grew. Another slender and graceful flower, which we often meet with in the open heath, or on banks sheltered by the hedges, is the blue and delicate harebell, in form so light and slender that the least breeze which blows causes its azure cups to wave. In many botanical works the harebell is described as having round leaves, and those who have gathered it, and found upon it long-bladed, grass-like foliage, have concluded that they must be mistaken in the flower, although, if they had examined it closely on its first appearance, they would find these rotund-shaped leaves growing upon the bottom of the stem; but these fade and die away as the plant attains its full growth and bursts out into bloom. Neither is it an uncommon occurrence to find the leaves which spring around the roots of

several flowers varying from those which shoot out higher up the stem. Every boy knows the beautiful rose-colored mallow, for there is scarcely a bank in summer that is not adorned with it, although the spot is often divested of almost all other vegetation; country children gather the seeds, and call them cheese-cakes, and you may often see a group of lusty children at a cottage door, with a pinafore full of these flattened cakes, playing at "feasting."

There are no words in the English language which bring before the "eye of the mind" sweeter associations than those of home and flowers. They both recall the age of childhood, and when we become men the pleasures of their remembrance are still dwelt upon with unabated joy. We never forget the flowers that

"Do paint the meadows with delight,"

as Shakspeare has happily said. And perhaps, in our childish days, we thought oftener about the flowers than we did of any other objects in the country, even as Wordsworth, who is a beautiful writer of poetry, did, and who has said,—

"For oft, when on my couch I lie,
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They *flash upon that inward eye*
Which is the bliss of solitude.
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."

The lines printed in Italics mean the thoughts; which you all know can recall distant objects and remembered scenes, and bring them so clearly before the mind that our fancy can see them, even to a stile, a tree, a cottage—the form of the very garden-bed, and the faces of our friends, although they are hundreds of miles away.

I have only pointed out a few of the commonest flowers which you will meet with during a summer walk, not fearing but that when you have gathered and examined these, you will

be tempted further by the beauty and delicacy of scores of others which I have not named, and which you will gladly dig up and transplant to your little gardens, in order that they may recall the pleasant places you have visited in your rambles; and while you watch them fade and wither, you will think how differently they looked in those wild, sweet nooks where the profuse hand of Nature had originally scattered them. When we look on a landscape in the distance, and see the rich and refreshing green of the trees and fields, we involuntarily exclaim, "Oh! how beautiful!" but when we wander among the grass, and explore the banks, and see almost every spot dotted with hundreds of wild flowers, we are struck with astonishment at the wonder-working hand of Nature, and gaze in admiration at the beautiful effects the seasons produce. We feel that some great and unseen power has been at work here; and we need no other instructor than the reason which we are gifted with to tell us that all these marvelous productions were formed by His mighty hand, who created all things in heaven and on the earth.

Nor do His marvels end here. In the deep, unexplored chambers of the ocean are hidden hundreds of wonderful things which the eye of man hath not yet seen; and it is only now and then that some buried object becomes revealed, as if to show us how little we know of what hath yet to come. Spots of earth which have slept undisturbed for ages are dug up, and we discover the skeletons of extinct animals which have never inhabited the earth in the memory of man, nor been met with alive in the remotest spots which ever human foot hath traversed. Huge turtles, and far stretching lizards, and gigantic mastodons—monsters that swam, and bellowed, and shook the ground, long before we can trace any record or vestige of man. We find the remains of fishes on the summits of high hills, and under the beds of deep rivers the bones of unknown animals; the tusks of the wild boar, the teeth of

the elephant, are mingled with the remains of the wolf, and found in many a wild spot excavated by the geologist, whose explanations only puzzle us the more, as he endeavors in vain to show us how they came together; and these remains are found in the very England in which we now live. They tell us how this island was once covered with the ocean; that the sea settled down, and then dry land appeared, covered with a vegetation that bears but little resemblance to that which we now see; that strange creatures swam across from neighboring shores, and lived upon it for ages; and then large portions of the land were again submerged beneath the waves. And so the land accumulated, layer upon layer, earth upon earth—the growth of unrecorded centuries—the silent work of age upon age, before the voice of man ever broke the awful stillness of that vast solitude.

Flowers again, which ever way we turn! but my book will be filled with descriptions of nothing else if I stop to describe a twentieth part of those we pass. How beautiful looks that tall chestnut-tree, with its grand cone of flowers, tapering upward to a starry point; what a delicious shade its broad green leaves make; and what a deep murmuring is ever kept up by the golden-belted bees, as they plunge into its fragrant blossoms. That beautiful deep lilac-colored flower, which you see growing among the wheat, is commonly called the corn-cockle. What a grace there is in those five long, green points which branch out at every angle of the petals: you might fancy that they were spears pointed by unseen fairy hands, to protect the beauty of the flower. Beside it grows the large ox-eye daisy, with its broad, golden crest, which looks as if set within a star of silver, forming a beautiful contrast to the deep scarlet of the poppy, which hangs its silken head like a folded banner that droops motionless on the air. But we must pass by the beautiful blue-bottle, whose rich tint appears to greater advantage beside the paler peach of the corn-cockle.

What a strange-looking scarecrow have they planted in the center of this cornfield. Saw ye ever a human figure like the one they have attempted to form out of the old ragged blue coat, crownless hat, and two odd gaiters; all stuffed with straw no doubt by the bird-boy himself, whose clapper and cry we hear from the hedge-side, under which he is now sheltering, instead of getting up, and beating about with his long pole to scare away the crows. Bloomfield, in his beautiful poem entitled the "Farmer's Boy," gives an admirable description of the

BIRD-BOY TENTING THE CORN.

and falling asleep while the "sparrows drop one by one" from the hedge among the wheat. You almost wonder how

the little fellow manages to pass away the day by himself, amid the solitude of these fields, and yet I doubt not but what he finds amusement enough in chasing the young birds which have just begun to fly; for solitary as the life of the bird-boy may appear, he has always objects at hand, both to improve and amuse him. There is something wild and romantic in leading this lonely life in the fields, far removed as that boy is from either village or homestead. Above his head he sees the great gray clouds, as they float silently along across the unbounded wilderness of the sky. Silent, save for the hoarse caw of the black rook, that flaps its wings, and floats like a spirit between earth and heaven; around him rise tall, majestic trees, and he looks on, wondering how many years they have taken to reach that giant height. Far away as he is from any road, and in the very heart of the extensive fields, from day to day, he hears no human sound but the singing of the birds, and the murmur of the wild bee; for miles around him the fields are shut in until the hay and corn harvest is over; he sees the gray rabbits emerge from their burrows in the banks, and watches their young ones as they run in and out among the standing corn; and he makes all kinds of curious snares, none of which will act, or catch them; he peeps through some hole in the hedge, and watches the hares as they play together and chase each other through the long grass; he mocks the cuckoo as she sings upon some distant tree, and sends back sound for sound over the silent landscape, for it is a treat to him to hear his own voice; he rattles his wooden clapper until his arm aches, and sings the very song which was sung above a hundred years ago by his forefathers, when they were boys, and "tented" corn like him—and which we have heard scores of times during our summer rambles—as the sound rung upon the air, and floated over the landscape:—

"Away birds, away!
And come no more to-day;

Away birds, away!
Take an ear, and leave an ear,
And come no more for seven long year;
Away birds, away!"

A real summer sound is that merry bird-boy's ancient song; and I can well remember the day when, wearing a little blue smock-frock and heavy ankle-boots, I sallied forth in the early morning into the green fields of Thonock, and wakened the sleepy echoes of Warton Wood with my loud bird-clapper and noisy song, while Gip, the shepherd-dog, barked in chorus. A merry life did I lead in those days, for my uncle was a great, good-natured farmer, who trusted me with his gun, never caring what I shot, so long as I did not shoot myself; and, when I had nothing else to fire at, I used to plant my brown, napless hat upon some gate-post, and if very lucky indeed, probably hit it one time out of ten. Oh what a proud day was that when I shot a great, staring, white owl, and carried it triumphantly into the old-fashioned farmhouse; my laurels, however, were somewhat fallen, when told by my kindhearted aunt that it was a cruel deed to kill a poor, inoffensive bird.

Alas! alas! every one seems to rest on the Sabbath but the poor bird-boy; he must be at his post Sunday and all days alike, to prevent the birds from eating up the corn—poor little fellow! I pity him. Let us walk farther until we are far beyond the sound of his clapper, to where a true Sabbath-like silence reigns. What a lovely prospect have we here! for, beautiful and tranquil as the country ever looks, compared to the deafening din and stifling smoke of cities, there is still a holier repose and calmer tranquillity hanging around it on the Sabbath, as if even Nature herself was resting in the midst of her works. A hallowed quietude seems to reign about the earth, the voices of the laborers are no longer heard in the fields—the creaking of the wagon, the cracking

of the whip, and the shouting of the driver are exchanged for the softened sound of the distant village bells, that peal far and wide over the surrounding landscape, echoing from the wood, and reverberating from the steep hillside, until dying away in their very faintness among hollow dells and hidden dingles. Far as the eye can reach, you see rustic groups threading their way over many a winding footpath and broad high-road; along the wood, and across the hill, and out of the valley they pour, in all kinds of picturesque costumes, and all journeying onward toward the same place—to where the tall spire points its silent finger to the sky, as if beckoning them to that hallowed spot; there to kneel, where their gray forefathers before them have for ages knelt, at the footstool of the Almighty Creator. The village church seems to rise up like the temple of God in the midst of His own beautiful works, for there are neither tall chimneys nor huge manufactories at hand to proclaim the power and triumph of man over labor, in the wonderful construction of machinery. All around you is primitive, simple, and pastoral. Those rustic worshipers move along with feelings which are almost unknown to the indwellers of cities, for their existence hangs upon the very changes of the elements—they feel that they are approaching Him who hath power to hold or give the rain, whose mighty hand can throw a shadow across the sunshine, and prevent its warmth and light from reaching the earth, "who sendeth seed-time and harvest," and poureth His bounteous plenty over the land: they live under the eye of heaven—the blue sky or the green leaves are ever above and around them; they are hemmed in with the works of God's own hand, instead of the walled cities built by man.

On the Sabbath you seem to walk more alone amid His works; you no longer behold man there at his labor, though the flowers blow, the birds sing, and the bee goes on murmuring beside the river that pauseth not in its low, sweet song,

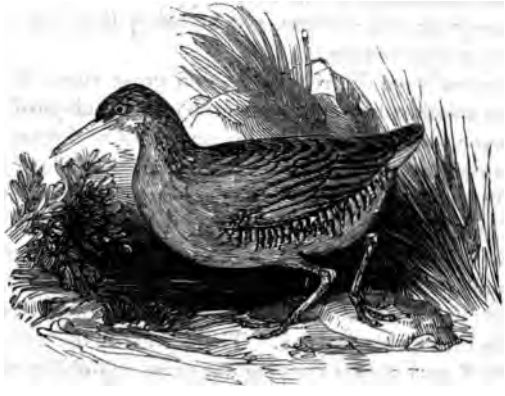
yet even these sounds seem subdued, as if they felt the holy stillness which pervades the Sabbath. All around speaks of peace; whichever way you turn the eye you see some object which tells you that man has ceased from his labor—the broad-wheeled wagon stands motionless in the shed; the edge of the sharp sythe is covered, and hung upon the wall; the horses move to and fro almost without a sound, for they are no longer cumbered by their jingling harness; even the very shepherd-dog lies coiled up in a corner, basking in the sunshine, as if he, too, knew that it was a day of rest; for a dreamy quietness seems to have settled down upon every field, farm, and homestead. You miss the noisy prattle of the village children in the green lanes, the whistling and singing of the elder ones as they went to and fro on their errands from field to farm—for they are gathered tógether under the slated roof of the humble Sunday-school; and at intervals (from the open windows) you catch the faint sound of some plaintive hymn, while they raise the song of praise which ascends unto heaven. And on this day the poor laborer, who has passed the whole week amid the quiet and solitariness of the fields—leaving his cottage early in the morning, and returning to it again late in the evening to find his children asleep as when he left them, after being wearied with their long day's play—even he has the pleasure of seeing them one day out of seven, gathering round his table, and climbing upon his knees, and telling him about all the wonderful things they have seen and heard since the last Sabbath—fondly asking him when it will be Sunday again, and hoping it will come soon, that he may spend the whole day at home with them.

The very village seems to sleep in the still sunshine of the Sabbath—the air no longer rings with the heavy hammering of the blacksmith: his shop is closed and the rustic gossip gone that leaned for the hour together over the unlatticed window-

sill; the plane no longer whistles in the joiner's shed; around the wheelwright's door every axle is at rest, and you behold only the proud cock and his feathered dames scratching among the chips and shavings: if the children sit beside the village brook, you miss the little boat which was so great an object of interest to them, for it is put away somewhere until the following day; and all they have to amuse themselves with now is, to throw in a weed or a flower and watch it float silently away. The hoop is hung up in the shed, the kite on its accustomed nail behind the door, bats and balls are all taken away, the little barrow lies with its wheel uppermost at the bottom of the garden, the spotted wooden horse without its head is thrust underneath the seat in the summer-house, and the tiny cart, which is filled with new occupants from morning until night, the scene of many a squabble and many a kiss, has for one day found rest for its weary wheels.

In the woods you find the same Sabbath-like silence reign —you no longer hear the sound made by the old fagot-gatherer as she snaps some fallen and rotten bough sharply asunder, before thrusting it into her huge bundle of sticks; you miss the noisy shouts of the boisterous birdsnesters, and no longer see their ragged figures diving in and out of the underwood as they examine bush after bush, and tree after tree. The ax of the woodman is silent. In the vast fields that slope down the hillsides, dipping and stretching away to the very verge of the river, not a human figure is visible, unless it be some wandering pedestrian enjoying his solitary Sunday walk. Where but the day before you saw groups of men, and women, and children busily employed in field-work, now nothing moves—their rakes and hoes and weeding-hooks are thrown together in a heap beside the hedge, there to await the coming morrow. Even on the river the boats are moored, just in the place where the last tide left

them, for they have not moved a single length since the Sabbath-day settled down; the angler has left its banks, and the rower has quitted his boat, the wheel of the water-mill is still; and all you see of motion there is the willows swaying idly in the breeze, and the water-flags rocking to the rippling of the current, or the solitary



WATER-CRAKE.

which is a very scarce bird, and, like the bittern, fond of sheltering in marshy and reedy places; for it can both swim and dive, but, like many a boy who has neither the courage nor the industry to master these necessary accomplishments, it prefers wading, and for this purpose chooses shallow water, where it feeds principally upon worms, slugs, and insects. Like the land-rail, it is a bad flier, and seems to trust more to its legs than its wings; it will also squat down in a similar manner to the former bird, to conceal itself; and its hiding-place is very difficult to be found, unless sought out by dogs, but to-day there is no one to disturb it. It generally builds in damp osier-beds, or in the midst of thick patches of water-

flags, forming its nest of coarse grass and reeds, in which it commonly lays six eggs, as white and spotless as the purest ivory. The upper part of the plumage is a blown olive, interspersed with black; the under part ash-color, mixed with brown, while the sides are checkered with black and white feathers. Many who have seen it in the winter have mistaken it for the corncrake, which they supposed to have changed its plumage in the autumn, not knowing that the land-rail migrates at that season.

But let us leave the river side, and cross these fields and enter the weather-beaten gates of the old church-yard, for service is over, and the congregation are about to depart to their rural homes, many of which are two or three miles off, lying in lonely and out-of-the-way places, so remote that many of the neighbors only see each other when they meet at church, or at the neighboring market town; and what kind greetings and fond inquiries do we hear, of who is ill—who is well—who has gone away—who has returned—who is born—who is married—and who, also, is dead. There you see old age leaning on its staff, and slowly spelling out some half-obliterated epitaph on a tomb-stone—a fond mother steps aside and pauses to look for a moment upon the grave of the lost daughter she so fondly loved, while her little son clings fondly to her gown, and innocently inquires when sister will come home again; a father shakes hands with a son he has not seen for a long time, for he is out at place at a solitary farmhouse, miles away, and it is only now and then, when his master is kind enough to feed the cattle during his absence, that he can be spared to attend church, and partake of the homely meal under his father's roof. In a country church-yard even the very children know who was last buried: they miss the great farmer, in his blue coat and top-boots; they miss the few half-pence, also, which he used to throw among them, when they ran to open the heavy white gate which, hung

upon the jaw-bones of a mighty whale, led to the high-road across the common. They wonder what has become of his strong black horse and the playful dog that used to leap up and lick their faces; and so wondering they stand in silence beside his newly made grave: for in a country village the inhabitant is soon missed from his accustomed place—there is a blank left—a vacant space that wants filling up—a something that moved, and spoke, and crossed their path almost every day, that amid the jostling and crowding of a great city might have glided into the grave unnoticed; while in a village a painful void is left behind, for the place he knew forgetteth him not, until a whole generation is swept away.

Nor ought we ever to forget, that amid all the business and pleasure and enjoyment of this life, it is ordained that we once shall die; that this earth is not our abiding-place, but that there is another and a better world, where there is no sorrow, where friends are never again separated, where true happiness only exists, where not an evil feeling nor an evil thought can enter; and that if we "do unto others as we would they should do unto us," avoid vice, and seek only to be virtuous, that if we do these things we shall be enabled to look upon death as a welcome sleep after the long day's journey of life is done—a sleep from which we shall awake to a brighter morning in a happier world.

Solemn and strange, on a summer Sunday evening, sounds the booming of the bittern in the twilight: it is but fancy, yet after the hushed silence of so hallowed a day, the strange, droning, unearthly tones of that solitary bird seem to fall subdued upon the ear, especially if your walk is beside some low, swampy moorland, the bank which runs between a river and some damp, rushy marsh, where the sound of the water comes with a low babbling, "ribble-bibble" upon the shore, and every now and then the willows give a sharp rustle, and then again are still. At such times may often be heard, on a

summer evening, that loud, dismal, hollow kind of sound, as if a bull was buried in a bog, and bellowing to get out again, for such is the noise made by the booming of the

BITTERN,

a bird which is not at all common in the present day, and is oftener heard than seen. The ignorant country people believe that it produces this sound by thrusting its head under the water, or by forcing its long, pointed bill into a hollow reed; but the truth is, its windpipe is peculiarly constructed: it can draw in at once a large quantity of air, and, by the aid of its powerful lungs, drive it out again at pleasure; and by this means it produces this loud, wild, unearthly sound. The bittern is a beautifully marked bird, principally covered with a pale yellow plumage, dotted with endless variegated spots

and deep streaks of black. It builds a coarse nest of sedge and water-plants, in which it lays four or five light olive-green colored eggs. It is but seldom seen in the daytime, as it then hides among the reeds and sedges in the low lands and marshes, from whence it commences its loud, booming call in the evening. It lives upon fish, frogs, insects, lizards, and snakes, when they chance to come in its way. It never flies far at a time when it is started from its hiding-place; and when only slightly wounded by the sportsman, it will courageously attack the spaniel that dares to capture it. Southey makes mention of the bittern in one of his poems, and says,

> "At evening, o'er the swampy plain,
> The bittern's boom came far."

Still there is ever something calm and beautiful about the repose of evening, and, as I have not hitherto introduced much poetry into my book, I must here insert a few verses, which I wrote several years ago, descriptive of

A SUMMER EVENING.

Another day, with mute adieu,
  Has gone down yon untrodden sky;
And still it looks as clear and blue
  As when it first was hung on high:
The sinking sun, the darkening cloud,
  That drew the lightning in its rear,
The thunder, trumping deep and loud,
  Have left no footmark there.

The village bells, with silver chime,
  Come softened o'er the distant shore;
Though I have heard them many a time,
  They never rung so sweet before—
A silence rests upon the hill,
  A listening awe pervades the air;
The very flowers are shut, and still,
  And bowed as if in prayer.

And in this hushed and breathless close,
  O'er earth, and air, and sky, and sea,
A still, low voice, in silence goes,
  Which speaks alone, great God, of Thee—
The whispering leaves, the far off brook,
  The linnet's warble, fainter grown,
The hive-bound bee, the homeward rook,
  All these their Maker own.

Now shine the starry hosts of light,
  Gazing on earth with golden eyes;
Bright sentinels that guard the night,
  What are ye in your native skies?
I know not! neither can I know,
  Nor on what leader ye attend,
Nor whence ye came, nor whither go,
  Nor what your aim nor end.

I know they must be holy things
  That from a roof so sacred shine,
Where sound the beat of angel wings,
  And footsteps echo all divine.
Their mysteries I never sought,
  Nor hearkened to what science tells,
For, oh! in childhood I was taught
  That God amid them dwells.

The deepening woods, the fading trees,
  The grasshopper's last feeble sound;
The flowers just wakened by the breeze,
  All leave the stillness more profound.
The twilight takes a deeper shade,
  The dusky pathways darker grow,
And silence reigns in glen and glade,
  While all is mute below.

And other eves, as sweet as this,
  Will close upon as calm a day—
Then, sinking down the deep abyss,
  Will, like the last, be swept away,

Until eternity is gained—
  The boundless sea without a shore,
That without time forever reigned,
  And will when time's no more.

Now nature sinks in soft repose,
  A living semblance of the grave;
The dew steals noiseless on the rose,
  The boughs have almost ceased to wave;
The silent sky, the sleeping earth,
  Tree, mountain, stream, the humble sod—
All tell from whom they had their birth,
  And cry, "Behold a God!"

Do you know what that is you just kicked aside with your foot? Some great, dead, prickly cone, say you? Not at all: it is a live

HEDGEHOG.

whose only safety, when danger is at hand, is in rolling itself up into that round, impenetrable ball. Nay, there is no making him unroll unless he pleases; and I can tell you, it must be a courageous dog to worry him. But it would be cruel to set a dog on such an inoffensive animal. Rolling must hurt it, and, no doubt, causes the spines to press heavily

upon the skin. I remember keeping one, when a boy, which I fed upon bread, milk, meat, or any thing which chanced to be at hand. Its usual food is insects, snails, worms, frogs, toads, and mice, and it will even attack and devour a snake, which it will give a sharp bite on the back, and then coil itself up again in an instant. After having waited a short time, the hedgehog will again unroll itself, and give the snake another bite, then as quickly form itself again into a round ball of prickly spines; and so it will go on, opening and shutting, biting and coiling itself up, until it has broken the snake's back, when it will begin at the tail and eat upward and upward, until the whole of the snake is devoured. Its favorite feeding-time is in the night; and it is very fond of hiding in some dark corner during the daytime. It sleeps through the whole of the winter. It is considered a great destroyer of black beetles, and is often kept for that purpose. The young, like kittens and puppies, are born blind, and there are generally from three to five in a litter. By some they are reckoned excellent eating; and I once came upon a Gipsy camp, and saw the Gipsys roasting two hedgehogs over the wood-fire. They offered me a portion of one to taste of; but I declined, more from fancy than any thing else, for the smell was the same as that which arises from roast pork; and they assured me that an "urchin" (for so they named a hedgehog) was superior to the finest sucking-pig that was ever eaten. But fancy goes a long way; and I dare say, when any of you have read of the Chinese eating little fat puppy-dogs, you would rather have fasted than dined with them; and yet they are fattened and sold as commonly in the markets of China, as rabbits and hares are in England.

There is always some amusing story or another to be found in a country village, for every one there knows his neighbor; and if there are any odd traits to be laughed at among the cottagers, they are soon picked out, and furnish matter for

the gossips for miles around; and I will tell you a merry tale, which I heard in the vale of Glentworth, of a man who thought that he was more hardly dealt with than any body else. He was a queer, dissatisfied sort of a fellow, who was always a-grumbling, and finding fault with his wife when he came home, if every thing was not in "apple-pie order," although every body but himself knew that a better managing little woman could not be found, if he searched every corner of the county. He never came home but what he growled like a dog with a sore throat; if he had to wait five minutes for his dinner, he complained that nothing was ever ready for him; if it was ready a few minutes before the time, he murmured, and said that all the goodness was stewed out of it; if she was busy, and did not enter at once into conversation with him, he said she was sulky; if she was chatty, and made herself agreeable, her tongue was running like the clatter of a milldam: in short, do whatever she might, she never did right. "I am compelled to work," he would often say, "from morning to night; as to you, you've only got the house to look after, and my meals to get ready, and what is that? why, nothing at all." He was deaf to all she had to say about looking after the children, attending to their little dairy (for they kept one cow), feeding the pigs, washing, and keeping the garden in order; all of which he said was nothing compared with what he had to do, and that he should like to change places with her, were it only for one day, then she would soon see the difference. The latter hint he had thrown out many a time, and one evening during the hay-harvest, after having run over his usual catalogue of complaints, great was his astonishment to hear her exclaim that she would change situations with him on the morrow; that she had stood foremost among the haymakers when she was single, and, as he had so often challenged her, she would go out to work in the fields, while he stayed at home and looked after the household affairs, and then she should see what *he* could do.

So the arrangement was made between them, and as the hay-field was near at hand, she was to come home to dinner. Noon-day came, and with it the wife home, as she had promised, her temper cheerful as ever, and her cheek already tanned by the heat of the sun; and great was her surprise, instead of seeing dinner upon the table, to find the fire extinguished, and the floor flooded with water. He had been making broth, the pot had boiled over, and, a very natural consequence, the chimney had taken fire, the result of which was, no dinner was forthcoming that day. In his hurry to extinguish the fire, he had left wide open the garden-gate while he went to and fro to fetch water from the well; and anxious to have dinner ready early, that he might have something to boast about, he had forgotten to feed the pigs, and they, never before having had to fast for so long a period, had broken out of the sty, and entered the garden, where two of them had helped themselves to whatever they could find green, and the third had tumbled head-foremost into the uncovered well. The eldest boy had been tempted by a penny to show a tinker all his mother's henroosts, and the Gipsy tinker had walked off with every egg he could lay his hands on, beside carrying away three couple of her finest chickens; nor was there a garment left upon the garden hedge, although she had left it in the morning covered with lawn as white as driven snow; and all this had been accomplished while her husband was busy in extinguishing the fire. The cow had also escaped from the shed, and was found locked up in a neighboring pinfold. Added to all this, he was drawing himself a draught of beer from the barrel in the dairy, when he was first alarmed by the cry of the children that the chimney was on fire, and in his eagerness to extinguish it, he rushed out without turning the tap, so that when his wife went to quench her thirst she found the barrel empty, and the dairy flooded; the cat also, embracing so favorable an opportunity, had helped herself to the milk, and licked up all the cream, as clean as if it had been

skimmed, while the half of a raw leg of mutton, which stood on a dish beside the stool, had been carried away by the dog, who, in his eagerness to escape, had upset the butter, and left it among the beer which flooded the floor. To mend matters, the children had upset the bee-hive, and, beside getting stung, the whole of the honey was scattered upon the ground. Nor did this chapter of accidents end here. Having heard that the best way to extinguish a fire in a chimney was to block up the pot with wet clothes, he had planted a ladder against the roof of the cottage, seized upon whatever came handiest, which was a washing-tub of wet clothes in the kitchen, and so had stuffed down the blazing chimney-pot his wife's best gown and the children's Sunday frocks, which, having passed this ordeal of water, fire, and soot, as a matter of course could never be worn again. The fire had frightened the pigeons from the dove-cote, and they never returned. Such was the home the wife found after only a few hours' absence in the hayfield, and which before had ever been so clean and comfortable that you might have sat down upon the floor to have eaten your dinner, as the saying is. The husband never spoke a word, but, sighing heavily, he took the hayfork from her hand, and stalked off, dinnerless, to the hayfield. When he came home again in the evening all was put to rights as if nothing had happened, saving the loss of the pig and the pigeons, and from that hour he was never known to grumble again; for although his experience in domestic affairs had been of such short duration, it had cured him, and he never after proposed to exchange situations with his wife. Some of the neighbors say that the old moral of "Let every body mind their own business," originated with him; but the saying is of much older date than my story.

Now is the time to look out for a squirrel's nest, if you wish to find the young ones in it; but it would be cruel to carry them away, for however much care and attention we might bestow upon them, we could never make them so com-

fortable as the old squirrels do, for they pay great regard to their young. But I should like to show you their nest, it is so beautifully made. The moss and leaves, and the fibers of trees are interwoven so neatly together that you might fancy a bird had built it; and sometimes it is found in a hole in the tree, or snugly imbedded in some point where the branches shoot out, looking like a great knot or protuberance; so skillful is the squirrel in matching the color of its nest with the bark, that you might look up among the branches a dozen times without discovering it, unless you chance to start the old one from the spot; and this, I can tell you, is no easy matter, for you might shout and pelt a long while before it would move. You would be astonished to see the leaps which the

SQUIRREL

can take from one tree to another; sometimes, when chased by boys, in its eagerness to escape it will, while making a spring, fall upon the ground, and that is the moment to capture it, for should the squirrel once reach the root of an adjoining tree, he is up, over your head, and off again among the branches in an instant. It is curious to see it eat, sitting

upon its haunches, and holding the food in its forepaws, like a monkey. Only give it a nut, and see how soon it will gnaw through the hard shell, being also very particular before eating the kernel to strip every bit of the brown skin off, before a morsel is swallowed. In its wild state it feeds upon young shoots, leaf-buds, acorns, nuts, beech-mast, and also makes sad havoc with the bark of young trees. It lays up provision for the winter, not only in its nest, but in any hole it may chance to find in the surrounding trees, having sometimes a dozen of these secret storehouses within a few leaps of its hiding-place; and sometimes the squirrels will build their nests in the same tree for years together. But here I can not resist giving you a description of a squirrel-hunt, written by an old poet named William Browne, above two hundred years ago:—

"——A nimble squirrel from the wood,
Ranging the hedges for his filbert-food,
Sits partly on a bough, his brown nuts cracking,
And from the shell the sweet white kernel taking:
When with their crooks and bags, a host of boys,
To share with him, come with so great a noise,
That he is forced to leave a nut nigh broke,
And for his life leap to a neighboring oak;
Thence to a beech, thence to a row of ashes;
While through the quagmires, and red water-plashes,
The boys run, dabbling on through thick and thin;
One tears his hose, the other breaks his shin;
This torn and tattered, hath, with much ado,
Got through the briers—and that hath lost his shoe;
This drops his band, that headlong falls for haste;
Another cries behind for being the last:
With sticks and stones, and many a sounding hollow,
The little fool with no small sport they follow;
While he, from tree to tree, from spray to spray,
Gets to the wood, and hides him in his *dray*" [nest].

I forgot to tell you, while describing the old river-bed and the grebe, what a place it was for the

LAPWING, OR PEEWIT.

which naturalists have named the Green Plover; although few of the country people, who live in the neighborhood of its haunts, would know the peewit by that name. It is a beautiful bird, with such a splendid plume of feathers upon its head; and so richly marked, that although only looking as if it were black and white at a distance, yet when clearly examined, it is beautifully shaded with blue, and purple, and green, almost as rich as the colors in a dove's neck, where you can neither tell where the green begins, nor the blue and the purple ends, so gorgeously are the hues blended when seen in a favorable light. Its motions in the air are very graceful. I have watched it for an hour together, and seen it make such sweeps and circles, now up, then down again, wheeling round, then flying afar off, to allure you from its nest, and all the time crying "pee-wit, pee-wit," loud or low, just as the wind bore the sound on the air, or as the shrill notes came softened by the distance. But what is most singular, it builds no nest, but lays its eggs (which are four in number) in any hole in the marshy ground; and I have often found the eggs crushed, and the young ones killed,

by the heavy hoof of a bullock. The young peewits can run two or three days after they are hatched, and are sooner able to "pick up their living" than any bird I know, as they feed on worms and slugs, and such like insects, which all moist and marshy grounds abound in. When fully fledged, they are a great ornament to a garden, and look very beautiful with their fine feathery crest blowing about—and only let them once see a worm, and down the throat it goes in an instant! and some say that they are so cunning as to tap with their feet upon the ground, when the silly worm, mistaking the sound for that of the mole, creeps out of its hole to escape the enemy that it fancies is coming along underground, and so is gobbled up by the artful peewit, and as the saying is, it "jumps out of the frying-pan into the fire."

Now, as the peewit is so useful in a garden in destroying insects, we could find plenty of customers for them, when fully fledged, who would willingly give us a shilling for a nest of four young ones. But then, as I have told you, they can run soon after they are hatched, and hide themselves in any hole or corner, where they would be as still as mice until we were gone; beside, if we had caught them while they were such poor, little, unfledged things, we could not have sold them. So the way we did was this: when we found a nest of young peewits, we used to fasten one end of a string to one of their feet, and peg the other end of it into the ground, so that they could not run far, and so we kept them prisoners until they were big enough to become "gardeners;" for you must remember they were not kept close prisoners after we took them away, but had the whole of the garden to range in, so that they did not fare so badly after all, although we were compelled to keep their wings cut rather closely; and when they once became used to the place they would remain there for years, without ever attempting to escape, for they lived better there in winter than they would have done in a wild state.

There was once a man who used to gather peewits' eggs, and send them to the markets to sell (for plovers' eggs are reckoned by many fine eating). I forget what his name was, but we never knew him by any other than that of Peewit; and he used to delight us boys by imitating the cry of the lapwing, which he could do so naturally that you might have fancied it was the peewit itself you heard. Well, I must tell you, he sometimes drank more ale than did him good, and got what you may either call "fresh," tipsy, or drunk, so that he could not walk straight; and one dark night, while staggering home in this state, he chanced to thrust his elbow through a cottage window, when, instead of walking away, he began to cry out, "peewit, peewit," and then hid himself at the end of the cottage, and varying his voice, as he alone could vary it, while imitating the cry of that bird, until the poor, simple people within looked out, and seeing no one there, actually believed that a peewit had flown against the window in the dark and broken it; for he was a good ventriloquist, and could make his voice sound as if it was a great distance off; nor would the secret ever have been discovered, had he not one night, while at the ale-house, divulged it himself. He was a very good-natured man, and when we used to call after him, "Peewit," he would answer, "Hey, hey!—my lads, peewit, peewit," and away he would go, sounding "peewit" in such a variety of tones that you might have fancied yourself wandering in the old river-bed, while a dozen different birds were answering one another; so shrill, loud, low, distant, and near at hand, did he seem to change his voice, as he walked along. Oh! what a garden full of peewits had he! many of them were several years old, and would come when he called, and eat out of his hand; then he had such droll names for them, such as Silver-lip, Tim Bobbin, Tommy-long-tuft, and one that was lame he called Betty Black, after a lame old woman who lived next door; and sometimes Betty and the bird would come hopping up

together, then the old woman would say, "It's too bad of thee, Peewit, that it is!" while Peewit only laughed at the joke—but he is dead now, poor old Peewit! Peace to his memory!

And now, my young readers, I have brought you to the close of Summer, for the silence of the birds in the fields, and the rustling of the white corn, which is already ripe for the sickle, tells me that Autumn is at hand, and through that "season of mists and yellow fruitfulness," it is my intention to conduct you in the next portion of this work, where, although we shall find fewer flowers than paved our pleasant Summer path, there will be no lack of objects of equal interest amid the many wonderful things which I yet hope to make you acquainted with. I will show you how Autumn opens her great garner-house, into which ten thousand orchards empty their fruit, and the yellow cornfields pour forth their treasures; also how beautiful is that boundary line which Nature has drawn across the different seasons. Farther on into the year I will advance, bringing the white and hoary Winter before you, with his "frost, and snow, and rime," and show you that amid all her changes Nature is ever beautiful, and that whatever object the eye lights upon harmonizes with the scenery around—that even in the absence of green trees, and variegated flowers, she is still busy with her wonderful work, making preparations for the approaching Spring; and that when I have finished my labor, you will be in possession of a complete History of the Seasons, which will be of use to you in after-life—a key which will open the great Garden of Knowledge, and enable you more clearly to comprehend the many marvels which are to be found therein; that you will be better able to understand those valuable works which, from age to age, have been produced by wise and learned men, and to look back with pleasure upon the little book which first ushered you into this great world of wonders. I will tell you how many animals, which can not find food in the inclement season of winter, sleep se-

cure and warm in their little nests, nor wake again until the approach of Spring, when Nature has provided for their wants; of birds that leave us, and fly hundreds of miles over wide and perilous seas, seeking far-off shores, where summer still reigns, and returning to us again when our fields and woods are covered with leaves and blossoms; how the twitter of hundreds of assembled swallows, which congregate on the banks of our rivers, are a sure sign that the Summer has departed, and that when they are again seen skimming over our ponds and rivers, and perched upon the eaves of our houses, we know that "the winter is past—the rain is over and gone—that the flowers again appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come!" For by such signs as these were the Seasons marked so far back as the days of King Solomon, and they were observed by Abraham when he pastured his cattle in the plains of Jordan. There are but few countries where the seasons follow each other in such beautiful succession as in our own, where such a distinct line is drawn between the division of Spring and Summer—Autumn and Winter; and the growing and ripening, the gathering in, and the decay of Nature, are all marked out in clear and comprehensive lines, and so strongly limned that the eye of the naturalist can not mistake them. Where each Season is known by its particular flowers, by the singing or the silence of its birds, that blossom follows bud, the fruit the flowers, and that even the withered and the fallen leaves form a rich soil for the vegetation of the coming Spring: that when to our eyes Nature may seem to sleep, she is still busy in her silent and hidden work, and forming the buds which are again to put forth and hang up her Summer chambers with waving curtains of green.

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